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M.A. (Final) SANSKRIT

- ENGLISH MEDIUM -

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वैदिक साहित्येतिहासः – १

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वैदिक साहित्येतिहासः - १

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COURSE DESIGN AND EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Prof. B. A. Vivek Rai
Vice-Chancellor & Chairman
Karnataka State Open University
Mysore - 570 006.

Prof. K. T. Shivanna
Dean (Academic) - Convener
Karnataka State Open University
Mysore - 570 006.

Dr. N. Radhakrishna Bhat
Chairman
Department of Studies
and Research in Sanskrit
Karnataka State Open University
Mysore - 570 006.

Editor & Subject Co-ordinator

Dr. M. Sivakumaraswamy
Professor of Sanskrit (Retd.)
Bangalore University,
Bangalore - 560 056

Course Writer

Developed by Academic Section, KSOU, Mysore.

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प्रस्तावना

प्रियाः संस्कृतविद्यार्थिनः

अस्मदीयकर्णाटकराज्यमुक्तविश्वविद्यानिलयस्य स्नातकोत्तरशिक्षणविभागे अन्तिमवर्षस्य संस्कृतकक्ष्यां प्रवेष्टृभ्यः भवद्भ्यः सर्वेभ्यः हार्दं सुस्वागतं व्याहरामि।

जगतीतलस्य प्राचीनतमभाषासु अग्रिमपङ्क्तौ विराजमाना संस्कृतभाषा अद्वितीयत्वेन वर्तते। वैदिकसंस्कृतं लौकिकसंस्कृतमिति संस्कृतं द्विधा विभक्तमस्ति। क्रिस्तपूर्वकाले वेदेषु दृश्यमानेयं भाषा क्रिस्तपूर्वपञ्चमशतके काव्यस्वरूपमलभत इति विदग्धाः विद्वांसः वदन्ति। उत्तरोत्तरकाले संस्कृतभाषासौ उन्नतशिक्षण-शासन-लेखन-काव्यादिषु सततं समुपयुज्यमाना सती सर्वत्र व्याप्तासीत्। विश्वस्य प्राचीनतमभाषासु संस्कृतभाषैव प्रप्रथमा इति भाषाविदः विमर्शकाश्च कथयन्ति। प्रायः लोके पञ्चसहस्र-वर्षाधिकम् इतिहासं लब्धवती संस्कृतादन्या भाषा एकापि नास्ति।

चत्वारो वेदाः विविधानि शास्त्राणि रामायण-महाभारतनामकादीतिहासाः अष्टादशपुराणानि-उपपुराणानि षड्दर्शनानि अनेकानि काव्यानि शास्त्र-व्याख्यानानि प्रशस्तयः शासनानि चाटुपद्यानि सुभाषितानीत्येवं रीत्या विविधप्रकारेषु निबद्धाः कृतयः संस्कृतवाङ्मये भूरि विलसन्ति। एतेषां परिचयः पाठ्यक्रमानुरोधेन यथावकाशं कारयिष्यते। संस्कृते विशेषाध्ययनार्थं गहनतमसंशोधनार्थं च युष्माकं सज्जीकरणमेव स्नातकोत्तरशिक्षणस्य मुख्यः उद्देशः।

आसु अन्तिमवर्षस्य कक्ष्यासु यूयं वेदसूक्तानि उपनिषदं-भगवद्गीतां वैदिकसाहित्यचरित्रं कौटलीयम्-अर्थशास्त्रम् याज्ञवल्क्यस्मृतिं वाल्मीकिरामायणे सुन्दरकाण्डस्य कांश्चन सर्गान् प्रबन्धलेखनानि वैयाकरणसिद्धान्तकौमुद्यां समासप्रकरणं भाषाशास्त्रम् आनन्दवर्धनस्य ध्वन्यालोकं मम्मटस्य काव्यप्रकाशं प्राचीना-र्वाचीनालङ्कारिकाणां परिचयं भारतीय-पाश्चात्यसाहित्यविमर्शयोः तुलनात्मकमध्ययनं च करिष्यथ।

युष्माकं स्वाध्यायसुलभाय स्वयंबोधनपद्धत्या (SIM) उपर्युक्तविषयेषु पाठाः विशिष्टरूपेण विद्वद्भिः आरचितास्सन्ति। अनेके विद्वांसः एतान् पाठान् महता परिश्रमेण सज्जीकृतवन्तः तेषां साहाय्यं सकार्तज्ञं संस्मरामि।

यूयं सर्वे एतान् सम्यगधीत्य एतेषु विषयेषु विशिष्टं ज्ञानं सम्पादयत इत्याशासे। "श्रद्धयाग्निः ज्ञानं समिध्यते" इति वेदवाण्यनुसारात् युष्माभिः श्रद्धाकृतमध्ययनं फलप्रदं यशःप्रदं च भूयादिति मदीयः आशयः। शुभं भवतु।

जीयात् गीर्वाणभारती

डा.एन्. राधाकृष्ण भट्
संस्कृतविभागाध्यक्षः
कर्णाटकराज्य-मुक्तविश्वविद्यानिलयः
मानसगङ्गोत्री, मैसूरु

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COURSE - VI -- BLOCK - 5

UNIT - 1

VEDIC LITERATURE

GENERAL

1.1.1 Introduction

1.1.2 Objectives

1.1.3 Content Exposition

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2. Trayī and Śruti
3. Classification of Veda

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2. Yajurvedasaṃhitās
3. Sāmavedasaṃhitās
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1.1.5 Brāhmaṇas

1.1.6 Āraṇyakas

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1.1.8 Interpretation of Veda - Traditional and Modern

1. First attempts in Brāhmaṇas
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   ii) Dayananda's Ṛgvedabhāṣya

7. Modern study of Veda

   i) John Muir ii) Hermann Grassmann

   iii) Max Muller iv) Richard Pischel

   v) Louis Renou

1.1.9 Questions

Appendix - I

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UNIT - 1

VEDIC LITERATURE

GENERAL

1.1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1.1 The Vedas constitute the sacred literature of the Hindus. Of Hindu religion they are the earliest source. They have regarded as the highest religious authority. All the obligatory duties of the Hindus are performed in accordance with the old Vedic ritual. In spite of the image-worship that has come into vogue, the regular obligatory duties are being performed even to this day according to the Vedic rites. Vedic Mantras have been used in all forms of worship and in the ceremonies connected with birth, marriage, etc., are being carried out with Vedic Mantras. The different systems of Hindu philosophy owe their origin to Vedas in some way or the other and recognise and declare their authority in one voice. The laws that govern the social, legal and domestic customs have been drawn by the Smṛtis from the Vedas. It is interesting to note that, according to Dasgupta, "The Vedas, far from being regarded as a dead literature of the past, are still looked upon as the origin and source of almost all literatures except purely secular poetry and drama." The exception regarding "secular poetry and drama", too, can be

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surely disregarded, because, as will be discussed subsequently, secular poetry and drama, too, can be traced to Vedic literature, for instance, the dialogue hymns of the Ṛgveda, the narratives in the Brāhmaṇas and the dramatic elements in the rituals described in the Brāhmaṇas.

1.1.2 OBJECTIVES

The present Unit gives a brief account of the Vedic literature. That will give an idea of the scope and extent of Vedic literature. First a brief account of the Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads. Then by way of acquaiting the students of the tools for the study of Veda, the methods of interpretation, both traditional and modern, are introduced. This provides a background to the study of the Veda. In the subsequent Units, more details about the vedic literature will be given. The subsequent Units are meant for elucidating and expanding the points made in brief in the present Unit.

1.1.3 CONTENT EXPOSITION

1.1.3.1 MEANING OF VEDA

The term 'Veda' is derived from the root 'Vid' - to know with the addition of 'Ghañ' termination. It means 'knowledge'. It is the 'knowledge' about 'dharma', gods and

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the Supreme Brahman (Dharmasya Devatānām Para-Brahmatattvasya). It teaches the extraordinary means of attaining what is aspired for and of averting what is not desirable - इष्टप्राप्त्यनिष्टपरिहारयोरलौकिकम् यो वेदयति स वेदः। This means is extraordinary (Alaukika) in sense that it is a means which is not known through the other valid instruments of knowledge like perception or inference :

प्रत्यक्षेणानुमित्या वा यस्तूपायो न विद्यते।

एनं विदन्ति वेदेन तस्माद् वेदस्य वेदता।।

That means which is not known through either perception or inference, is known through Veda. Hence it is that Veda is called Veda. Āpastamba gives a technical definition of Veda as "मन्त्रब्राह्मणयोर्वेदनामधेयम्" - "Veda stands for Mantra and Brāhmaṇa. "Mantra" stands for the "Saṃhitās", which are the collections of Mantras. Mantra means a prayer or eulogy addressed to a deity. Brāhmaṇa stands for the rest of the Veda containing texts called Brāhmaṇas dealing with the sacrificial ceremonies, Āraṇyakas which give a symbolical representation of sacrificial ceremonies and which form a transition from the ritualistic thinking to the spiritual thinking and Upaniṣads which are predominantly philosophical in content. Thus Veda includes four parts as Saṃhitā, Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka and Upaniṣads.

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1.1.3.2 TRAYĪ AND ŚRUTI

Veda is called "Trayī" with reference to the three Vedas, viz., Ṛgveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda, which are useful for the sacrifice. These are called sacrificial Vedas. The fourth Veda that is left out here is Atharvaveda. It is supposed, on this ground, that Atharvaveda was not accepted as a part of Vedic canon in ancient times and that it was accepted later. It is also supposed that it probably attained its present form considerably later than the Ṛgveda. Instead of indulging in these suppositions, it is better to say that the three Vedas, the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda and the Sāmaveda are directly used in the sacrificial ceremony and hence they are mentioned as Trayī, Atharvaveda does not belong to the sacrificial ceremony but caters to the needs of the domestic ceremonies and other rites connected with the wealth and welfare of the people at large. The contents of the Ṛgveda and the other two of the "Trayī" group, on the one had, and those of the Atharvaveda, on the other hand, are complementary to each other.

The Vedas are called "Śruti" (form 'Śru' - to hear), because they are handed down in oral tradition from a period of unknown antiquity. The whole of Vedic literature was got by heart by the disciples by hearing it from their teachers. The most remarkable thing about this oral tradition is that it has handed down the Vedas through the course of at least five thousand years with little or no

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interpolations at all. No body can say since how many thousands of years before that they were transmitted through oral tradition in such unhindered precision.

1.1.3.3 CLASSIFICATION OF VEDA

The classification of Veda as 'Vidyā' is into two as Parā and Aparā, the higher and the lower. This is almost synonymous with the classification of Veda into Jñānakāṇḍa and Karmakāṇḍa. The Karmakāṇḍa is the term used with reference to the former part of Veda (Pūrvabhāga) consisting of the Saṃhitās and the Brāhmaṇas and the Jñānakāṇḍa is that used with reference to the latter part of Veda (Uttarabhāga) consisting of the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads. But Veda as a whole is classified as fourfold as the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda, the Sāmaveda and the Atharvaveda each having its own Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka and Upaniṣad portions. According to the tradition recorded in the Purāṇas, Veda was one composite whole and it was classified by Vedavyāsa in the beginning of the Dvāpara Age in order to remove the confusions among the scholars regarding the identification of each Veda as Ṛgveda, etc. This was also necessitated by the requirements of the four priests in a sacrifice called Hotṛ, Adhvaryu, Udgātṛ and Brāhman. Hotṛ is the Ṛgvedic priest who recites the Ṛks to invoke (Hotā = invoker) the gods to participate in the sacrifice. Adhvaryu who directs the sacrificial ceremony

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true to his name (Adhvaraṁ Yunakti Iti), is the Yajurveda priest, who quotes the sacrificial formulae (Yajuṣ) and conducts the sacrifice. Udgātṛ is the Sāmaveda priest who specialises in the singing of hymns in sweet musical tone. Brāhman is the general supervisor of the sacrificial ceremony, well-versed in all the four Vedas, especially in the Atharvaveda for warding off all the evils. Having thus classified the Veda according to the requirements of the priests, Vedavyāsa entrusted them to his four disciples. Thus he entrusted Ṛgveda to Paila, Yajurveda to Vaiśampāyana, Sāmaveda to Jaimini and Atharvaveda to Sumantu and directed them to continue those traditions.

1.1.4 SAṂHITĀS

There are four Saṃhitās of Veda called Ṛgvedasaṃhitā, Yajurvedasaṃhitā, Sāmavedasaṃhitā and Atharvavedasaṃhitā.

1.1.4.1 ṚGVEDASAṂHITĀ

The first among the Saṃhitās of Veda is the Ṛgvedasaṃhitā. It is mainly a collection of hymns addressed to the different deities such as Agni, Indra, Varuṇa, Rudra, Uṣas, Maruts, Parjanya, etc., who are the personifications of the powers of nature. There are some secular hymns which

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throw light on the social customs, sports and pastime of the people of Ṛgvedic times. There are some hymns with philosophical content. There are in all 1028 Sūktas in the Ṛgvedasaṃhitā. The total number of Mantras in it is 10552. All these Mantras are metrical in form. They are set different metres such as Gāyatrī, Anuṣṭubh, Triṣṭubh, Jagatī etc., Ṛgvedasaṃhitā is divided into ten Maṇḍalas. Its Śākalaśākhā recension is available.

1.1.4.2 YAJURVEDASAṂHITĀS

Yajurvedasaṃhitās come under two heads of Kṛṣṇayajurveda and Śuklayajurveda. The Saṃhitās of four Śākhās are available in the case of Kṛṣṇayajurveda. They are Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā, Kāṭhakasaṃhitā, Kapiṣṭhala-Kaṭhasaṃhitā and Taittirīyasaṃhitā. These Saṃhitās have the mixture of prose and verse. Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā which is otherwise known as Kālāpa, has four Kāṇḍas and 54 Prapāṭhakas or Adhyāyas. Kāthakasaṃhitā is closely connected with the Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā in language and content. Kapiṣṭhalakathasaṃhitā is available in fragments. Taittirīyasaṃhitā has seven Aṣṭakās (or Kāṇḍas) and 44 Prapāṭhakas or Adhyāyas. All the Mantras required by the Adhvaryu are included in this. The common feature of these Kṛṣṇayajurvedasaṃhitās is the mixing of Brāhmaṇa sentences giving 'Viniyoga' with Mantras in metrical form.

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Śuklayajurveda is entirely metrical in form. It is called Vājasaneyīsaṃhitā after the name of Yājñavalkya Vājasaneya. It is available in the recensions of two Śākhās called Kāṇva and Mādhyandina. It has 40 Adhyāyas and 303 Anuvākas.

1.1.4.3 SĀMAVEDASAṂHITĀS

The Sāmavedasaṃhitā is available in the recensions of two Śākhās called Kauthumas and Rāṇāyanīya. It is divided into Arcikā and Uttarārcikā. In the Arcikā portion has 6 Prapāṭhaka and each Prapāṭhaka has ten 'das'ats' (ten Ṛcas). The sixth Prapāṭhaka has nine 'das'ats'. Uttarārcikā contains 9 Prapāṭhakas, each Prapāṭhaka consisting of two or three Khaṇḍas. Only 75 Mantras are new in this Saṃhitā, the rest, i.e., 1549 Mantras are taken from the Ṛgveda. The Sāmagāna is the origin of Indian music. Kauthumas recension is incomplete.

1.1.4.4 ATHARVAVEDASAṂHITĀ

Atharvavedāsaṃhitā is available in the recensions of two Śākhās, viz., Paippalāda and Śaunaka. The Śaunakīya recension has 20 Kāṇḍas and 731 Sūktas. This Saṃhitā is called Atharvāṅgirasa and Bṛgvaṅgirasa. It is mainly a collection of incantation for various purposes. The group of

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hymn called Bhaiṣajyāni deal with diseases and their characteristics and give prescriptions of medicines and incantations to cure them. Here we find the origin of Āyurveda. There are other groups of hymns called Āyuṣyāṇi, Pauṣṭikāni, Prāyascittāni, Ābhicārikāni etc. Rājakarmāni group happens to be origin of Hindu polity. There are some Yājñika Mantras.

1.1.5 BRĀHMAṆAS

Brāhmaṇas are in prose. They give details about the sacrificial ceremony. There are Brāhmaṇas belonging to each Śākhā of Veda. The contents of the Brāhmaṇas can be brought under two heads of Vidhi and Arthavāda. "Vidhi" stands for the directive statements of the Brāhmaṇa while Arthavāda stands for the explanatory passages containing the praise or condemnation of the matter connected with the sacrifices and discussions about the significance of the sacrifice and the materials used in it. As a part of Arthavāda come the Itihāsas, Ākhyānas and Purāṇas. They are the interesting portions of the Brāhmaṇas.

Some important Brāhmaṇas are : Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa and Kauṣitaki-Brāhmaṇa (Ṛgveda); Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda); Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (Śukla-Yajurveda); Tāṇḍya-Brāhmaṇa, Ṣaṭviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa, Jaiminīya or Talavakāra-Brāhmaṇa, Mantra-Brāhmaṇa, Daivata-Brāhmaṇa,

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Sāmavidhāṇa-Brāhmaṇa, Saṃhitopaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa, Ārṣa-Brāhmaṇa and Vaṃśa-Brāhmaṇa (Sāmaveda); Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa (Atharvaveda).

Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa contains 40 Adhyāyas dealing with Agniṣṭoma, Ukthya, Ṣoḍaśa, Atirātra, Darśapūrṇamāsa etc. Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa deals with mainly Darśapūrṇamāsa and Somayāga in its 30 Adhyāyas. Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa consists of 3 Kāṇḍas. The first and the second Kāṇḍa have 8 Prapāṭhakas each. The third Kāṇḍa has 12 Prapāṭhakas. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa has 14 Kāṇḍas and 100 Adhyāyas. The Tāṇḍya-Brāhmaṇa has 25 Adhyāyas. Hence it is otherwise known as Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa. Ṣaḍviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa is an appendix of the Tāṇḍya-Brāhmaṇa. It has 5 Prapāṭhakas. The 5th Prapāṭhaka is called Adbhuta-Brāhmaṇa. Sāmavidhāna-Brāhmaṇa consists of three Prakaraṇas-Kṛcchra, Atikṛcchra and Kṛcchrātikṛcchra. Ārṣeya-Brāhmaṇa has 3 Prapāṭhakas and 82 Khaṇḍas. Daivata-Brāhmaṇa has 3 Khaṇḍas Saṃhitopaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa consists of 5 Khaṇḍas. Vaṃśa-Brāhmaṇa has 3 Khaṇḍas. It is a small Brāhmaṇa. Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa is available in fragments. Jaiminīya-Upaniṣadbrāhmaṇa is a part of this Brāhmaṇa. This has four Adhyāyas. Gopathabrāhmaṇa has two parts called Pūrvagopatha and Uttaragopatha. The former has 135 Kaṇḍkās and the latter has 123.

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1.1.6 ĀRAṆYAKAS

Āraṇyakas are the further developments of the Brāhmaṇas. They contain thinking about the deities. They are meant for the Vānaprasthas who have retired to the forest. They represent a transition from the Brāhmaṇas which are devoted to the details about the sacrificial rites to the Upaniṣad which deal with the philosophical concepts. They form a bridge between the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads. As they are for the guidance of the forest-dwellers who are not actually engaged in the sacrificial activity, they portray the symbolic and philosophical aspects of the deities and the sacrifices. For instance, Sūrya is a symbol of Medhāśakti (intelligence), Agni stands for desire, Soma represents feeling, the Aśvamedha stands for penance with the 'Aśva' symbolising the world. Some materials of the Brāhmaṇas and some those of the Upaniṣads come in the Āraṇyakas. For instance, in the first chapter of the Aitareyāraṇyaka gives details about the Soma sacrifices as found in the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa. Similarly, the second chapter of the same contains thinking about Prāṇa, Puruṣa etc., which denote the nature of the Viśvātman and thus it is akin to the Upaniṣads in content.

Some Āraṇyakas are : Aitareyāraṇyaka, Sāṅkhāyana or Kauśītaka Āraṇyaka belong to the Ṛgveda. Aitareyāraṇyaka has five Āraṇyakas which are divided into 18 Adhyāyas. Kauśitakī Āraṇyaka contains 15 Adhyāyas.

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Maitrāyaṇīyāraṇyaka belongs to the Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda, Bṛhadāraṇyaka belongs to Śukla-Yajurveda is called Āraṇyaka. It is actually an Upaniṣad. Talavakārāraṇyaka belonging to the Talavakāra-Brāhmaṇa (Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa) of the Sāmaveda has four Adhyāyas. There is not even a single Āraṇyaka belonging to the Atharvaveda.

1.1.7 UPANIṢADS

Generally Upaniṣads come as the final portions of the Brāhmaṇas. They are the final portions of the Veda. They are called Vedānta. In the older Upaniṣads such as Bṛhadāraṇyakas, there is a variety of material. The fundamental teaching of the Upaniṣads pertains to Brahmaṇ, Ātman, Jagat, Mokṣa, means to Mokṣa. Besides the philosophical concepts, Upaniṣads also teach ethical values. As mentioned in the Muktikopaniṣad, the number of Upaniṣads is 108. They are available as belonging to the different Sūktās of Vedas. Among these about 13 or 14 Upaniṣads are regarded as ancient. Among these ancient Upaniṣads the well-known are the ten called Īsa (Śukla-Yajurveda), Kena (Sāmaveda), Kaṭha (Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda), Praśṇa (Atharvaveda), Muṇḍaka (Atharvaveda), Māṇḍūkya (Atharvaveda), Taittarīya (Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda), Aitareya (Ṛgveda), Chandogya (Sāmaveda) and Bṛhadāraṇyaka (Śukla-Yajurveda). The four Upaniṣads viz., Kauśītakī (Ṛgveda), Śvetāśvatara (Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda),

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Maitrāyaṇīya (Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda) and Mahānārāyaṇīya (Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda), also belong to this group.

Details of the Samhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads will be given in the subsequent Units. It is interesting and also important to know about the interpretation of Veda, traditional and modern. This topic is taken up here. (Vide Appendix - 1 for a table giving the names of the Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads).

1.1.8 INTERPRETATION OF VEDA - TRADITIONAL AND MODERN

It is evident from the references that the interpretation of Veda has been a scholarly pursuit from very ancient times in India. The problem of understanding Veda seems to have been felt even during the Ṛgvedic times. In the famous hymn addressed to speech (Vāk), it is said that seeing, one does not see speech, even hearing, one does not hear speech, while to another she revealed herself like a loving wife to her husband :

उत त्वः पश्यन्न ददर्श वाचमुत त्वः शृण्वन्न श्रुणोत्येनाम्।

उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं विसस्रे जायेव पत्युः उशती सुवासाः।।

(Ṛv. X.71.4)

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According to Yāska the first half of the Mantra describes the ignorant, while the second half praises one who understand the meaning. (Nirukta, I.19). This implies that the meaning of Veda would be revealed only to a persevering scholar.

1.1.8.1 FIRST ATTEMPTS IN BRĀHMAṆAS

The first attempts at interpreting Veda are evident in the Arthavāda portions of the Brāhmaṇas, the texts dealing with sacrificial ceremonies. They discuss about the value and significance of the rites and also prevent exegetical interpretations of the Mantras used in the sacrifices. For instance, the Aitareya Brāhmaṇas explains the Mantras such as "सर्वे नन्दन्ति यशसागतेन ..." and "अगन् देव ऋतुभिः .." etc., (I.3.2) to associate them with the rite on hand. The Brāhmaṇas also give etymologies which presuppose the Nirukta of Yāska. For instance :

i) वृत्रो ह वै इदं सर्वं वृत्वा शिश्ये। यदिदमन्तरेण द्यावापृथिवी स इदं वृत्वा शिश्ये तस्माद् वृत्रो नाम। (Śatapatha Brā. 1.1.34)

ii) इन्द्रो ह वृत्रमशकद् हन्तुमभि तस्माच्छक्रर्यः।
(Kauśītakī Brā. 23.2)

iii) रथं मर्या क्षेप्लातारीत् इति तद् रथन्तरस्य रथन्तरत्वम्।
(Tāṇḍya Brā. 7.6.4)

These are the sources of inspiration for Nirukta.

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1.1.8.2 NIRUKTA OF YĀSKA

Yāska has prepared a glossary of Ṛgvedic word called Nighaṇṭu and while explaining the meanings of those words he has quoted about 600 Ṛgvedic Mantras and etymologically interpreted them. This work belongs to 6th-7th B.C. Thus Nirukta gives an account of select Ṛgvedic Mantras with etymologies. However this is not a regular Bhāṣya on Ṛgveda.

Yāska denounces the recitation of Veda without understanding the meaning : "स्थाणुरयं भारहारः किलाभूदधीत्य वेदं न विजानाति योऽर्थम्" (He who does not know the meaning even after reading Veda, is indeed a post which bears a mere burden). He speaks of three methods of interpretation of the Vedic Mantras, incidentally while commenting on Ṛv. X.71.5, as Yājña (sacrificial interpretation), Daivata (divine interpretation) and Ādhyātma (philosophical interpretation). Here he says that the meaning is the flower and fruit of speech; if sacrificial interpretation is the 'flower' of speech, the divine interpretation is the 'fruit' and if the divine interpretation is the 'flower', the philosophical interpretation is the 'fruit'.

अधेन्वा चरति माययैष वाचं शुश्रुवाँ अफलामपुष्पाम्।

(Ṛv. X.71.5 - second half)

अर्थं वाचः पुष्पफलमाह। याज्ञदैवते पुष्पफले। दैवताध्यात्मे वा।

(Nirukta, I.20)

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He shows the application of these methods in his interpretation of Ṛgvedic Mantras. For instance, in the explanation of the Ṛgvedic Mantra "यत्रा सुपर्णा अमृतस्य, etc.," (I.164.21), Yāska refers to the Adhidaivata and Ādhyātma methods and interprets the Mantra according to both the methods. (Nirukta III.12). He is also aware of the Aitihāsika tradition of Vedic interpretation and often contrasts that tradition from that of the etymologists (Nirukta) which is his own tradition : तत्को वृत्रः। मेघ. इति नैरुक्ताः। त्वाष्ट्रोऽसुर इति ऐतिहासिकाः। (Nirukta, II.16). He uses the Itihāsas for setting the background to the Mantras. For instance the story of Devāpi and Śantanu is given as a background to the "Varṣakāmasūkta" (Ṛv. X.98) and the story of Viśvāmitra as a background to Ṛv. III.33, a dialogue between Viśvāmitra and the rivers Vipāś and Śutudri. (Nirukta, II.11-12, 24-25).

1.1.8.3 THE AITIHĀSIKA METHOD : BṚHADDEVATA OF ŚAUNAKA

The Bṛhaddevata of Śaunaka represents fully the Aitihāsika tradition. It occupies a position mid-way between the Nirukta and the full-fledged commentaries like those of Skandasvāmin, Udgīthācārya, Veṅkaṭamādhava and Sāyaṇa. It is to a considerable extent based on Yāska's Nirukta and provides material in turn to those commentators. Its main object is to state the deities of the Sūktas or Mantras within the Sūktas of the Ṛgveda. It also contains a large number of

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myths and legends about the deities and the seers, which are intended to help in understanding the meaning of the respective Sūktas or Mantras as the case may be.

1.1.8.4 PRE-SĀYAṆA BHĀṢYAKĀRAS

The pre-Sāyaṇa intepreters of Ṛgveda are Skandasvāmin, Udgīthācārya, Veṅkaṭamādhava and Madhvācārya.

1) **Skandasvāmin**, as known from the colophon appended at the close of Adhyāyas in each Aṣṭaka (a couplet), was a resident of Valabhi. His father's name is Bhartṛdhruva and his date is 630 A.D. The commentary of Skandasvāmin is available on I.1.1 to I.56.1, I.62.1 to I.121.15; V.57.1 to V.61.19; VI.29.1 to VI.75.6. Skandasvāmin is the follower of ritualistic school (Yājña). The commentary begins with a prayer to Gaṇapati (Vighneśa). He has spoken of Vedic Mantras as of five kinds as - (i) प्रैषाः - pertaining to summoning, e.g., a priest is called upon to commence the ceremony (दैव्याः शमितार आरभध्वम्, Ai. Brā. II.6); (ii) करणाः - pertaining to action (इदमहमर्वावसोः सदने सीदामि, Śata. Brā. 1.5.1.24); (iii) क्रियमाणानुवादिनः - something spoken after the action is accomplished (युवा सुवासाः, Ṛv. III.8.4); (iv) शस्त्राभिष्टवनादिगताः - pertaining to praises of weapons etc., (आ त्वा रथं यथोतये, Ṛv. VIII.68.1); and (v)

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जपानुवचनादिगता: - pertaining to sacred repetitions, etc. (तदद्य वाचं प्रथमं मसीय, Ṛv. X.5.4, आपो रेवती: Ṛv. X.30.12).

Skandasvāmins Bhāṣya on Ṛgveda as far as its is available is detailed. Grammatical explanations are also given clearly.

2) Harisvāmin's Śatapathabrāhmaṇa-Bhāṣya : Harisvāmin was a disciple of Skandasvāmin. He belonged to 638 A.D., as it is the date of his Bhāṣya. His Bhāṣya is on the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa.

3) Bhāṣyas on Sāmaveda : The first Bhāṣyakāra of Sāmaveda is known to be Madhava. He has written Bhāṣya on both the Arcikā and Uttarārcikā. The name of the Bhāṣya is Vivaraṇā. This Bāṣya is not published. Notes from this Bhāṣya are given by Satyavrata Sāmaśramin in his Pīṭhikā to Sāyaṇabhāṣyasaṃskaraṇa. This Bhāṣyakāra belonged to 7th century A.D.

Another Bāṣya by Bhāratasvāmin belonging to 13th Century A.D. is also not published. To the beginning of the same century belonged Guṇaviṣnu's commentary called Chāndogyamantrabhāṣya, which is published from Calcutta Sanskrit Parishat. This gives the explanation of all the Mantras used by the Sāmavedin's. This belongs to the Kauthumaśśākhā.

4) Udgīthācārya has written Bāṣya on Ṛv. X.5.4 to X.12.5, X.13.2 to X.83.6. He too belongs to the Yājña

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tradition. Veṅkaṭamādhava says that Skandasvāmin, Nārāyaṇa and Udgītha jointly wrote the Bhāṣya on the Ṛgveda. Nārāyaṇa wrote on the middle portion of the Ṛgvēda and Udgītha wrote on the final portion. Udgītha's is available on some portions of the tenth Maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda.

5) Veṅkaṭamādhava was a son of Veṅkaṭārya - श्रीवेंकटार्य-तनयो व्याचिकीर्षति माधवः (opening line of the couplet attached to the commentary). He calls himself as the son of Sundarī - विश्वामित्रकुलेजातः माधवः सुन्दरीसुतः (colophon at the end of several chapters). It is clear that in Veṅkaṭa Mādhava, the first name is his father's and second is his. He belonged to 10th Century A.D. (according to Lakṣmaṇa Svarūp). His commentary is available in full (from Ṛv, I.1.1 to X.191.4). It belongs to Yājña tradition. It is a very brief Bhāṣya.

6) ṚGBHĀṢYA OF MADHVĀCĀRYA (PŪRṆAPRAJÑA)

Ṛgbhāṣya of Madhvācārya (1238-1317) offers philosophical interpretation without rejecting the ritualistic interpretation. Madhva's philosophical interpretation has its roots in the Veda itself. Ātharvaṇa Upaniṣad says that there are two levels of knowledge, Paravidyā and Aparavidyā. The ritual knowledge obtained from the Veda and Vedāṅgas is Aparavidyā, while the knowledge of Akṣara, the Supreme God, from them is Paravidyā. (Atha.Up. 2.5.5). The doctrine

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of Madhvācārya is that the entire Veda conveys the Supreme God, i.e., Viṣṇu This is established on two grounds; firstly on the ground that the Oṃkāra conveys Brahman, i.e., Viṣṇu and the import of Veda is "Om"; and secondly on the ground that the purpose of Veda is to provide the knowledge to attain freedom from worldly entanglements and it is only the knowledge of the Supreme God and his grace can serve this purpose.

7) KṚṢṆAYAJURVEDA-BHĀṢYA

Prior to Sāyaṇa, some scholars had written Bhāṣyas on the Taittirīyasaṃhita of Kṛṣṇayajurveda. Among those Bhāṣyas Bhaṭṭa-Bhāskaras Bhāṣya is completely available. Bhaṭṭa-Bhāskara belonged to 11th Century A.D. His Bhāṣya is called Jñānayajñabhāṣya. He refers to the opinions of different Ācāryas while commenting on the Mantras. He gives Ādhidaivārtha and Adhyātmārtha for the Mantras along with Ādhiyajñārtha.

8) ŚUKLAYAJURVEDA-BHĀṢYA

There are two Bhāṣyas on the Mādhyandina-Saṃhita of this Veda. The Bhāṣya of Uvaṭācārya is one of them. He was a resident of Anandapura and his father was Vajraṭa. He has mentioned that he wrote his Bhāṣya when Bhoja was

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ruling at Avanti. Thus he belonged to 11th Century A.D. The Bhāṣya is small. n the case of some Mantras, he has given Ādhyātmārtha. Another Bhāṣya on the Saṃhita is that of Mahīdharācārya called Vedadīpa. Mahīdhara has elucidated the "Yajñaprakriya" in such a way to clearly intelligible with the help of Nirukta and Śrautasūtras. He belongs to post-Sāyaṇa times (i.e., 16th Century A.D.).

It may be noted here that Uvaṭa has written Bhāṣyas on Ṛkprātiśakhya, Yajuḥprātiśākhya, Ṛksarvānukramaṇī and Īśopaniṣad also.

9) KĀṆVASAṂHITĀ-BHĀṢYA

Halāyudha, who belonged to 12th Century A.D., has written a Bhāṣya called Brāhmaṇa Sarvasva on the Kāṇvasaṃhitā of Śuklayajurveda. He was in the court of Lakṣmaṇasena of Bengal.

1.1.8.5 BHĀṢYAS OF SĀYAṆA

1) SĀYAṆAS ṚGBHĀṢYA

Sāyaṇa's Bhāṣya is the best Bhāṣya on Ṛgvēda. Sāyaṇa was born in 1315 A.D. and died in 1387 at the mature age of 72. The colophon at the end of the first

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Aṣṭaka of Ṛgveda informs that Sāyaṇa was a high rank person in the kingdom of Bukka of Vijayanagar, served as a Prime Minister of Kampana (younger brother of Harihara) and was an Andhra Brāhmaṇa of Bharadvaja Gotra, Bodhāyaṇa Sūtra and Taittirīya Śākhā and that name of the Bhāṣya was Mādhavīyavedārthaprakāśa Ṛksaṃhitābhāṣya. His father was Māyaṇa and mother Śrīmati. His elder brother was Mādhava, a reputed scholar in Pūrva and Uttaramīmāṃsās, and younger brother was Bhoganātha, a reputed poet. He was a disciple of Vidyātīrtha, Bhāratītīrtha and Śrīkaṅṭhācārya and was associated with Śṛṅgeri Maṭha which had received royal patronage of Harihara and Bukka.

Sāyaṇas Bhāṣya, which also belongs to the Yājñika tradition, supersedes all the earlier commentaries in that tradition by its extent as well as depth. Although an ardent follower of the Yājñika method, Sāyaṇa has freely used the Nairukta method and has fully relied upon Pāṇinis Aṣṭādhyāyī for explaining the peculiarities of forms and accent of Vedic words. The Aitihāsika tradition is also incorporated to suit his purpose. (Vide his commentary on Ṛv. II.12, III.33, etc.).

Some hymns are interpreted according to the Adhyātma method. For instance, in the case

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"Asyāvāmīyasūkta" (Ṛv. I.164) Sāyaṇa has explicitly said that he has adopted this method. Thus Sāyaṇa's Ṛgbhāṣya is the only true representative of the traditional interpretation of Ṛgveda in all its entirety. It is an indispensable guide for the understanding of the Ṛgveda.

2) OTHER BHĀṢYAS OF SĀYAṆA

Apart from Ṛgvedasaṃhita, Sāyaṇa has written Bhāṣyas on Taittirīyasaṃhita, Sāmavedasaṃhitā, Kāṇvasaṃhitā and Atharvavedasaṃhitā. As regards the Bhāṣya on Atharvaveda, it is known that it was on the whole of Atharvaveda. But the Bhāṣya on only 12 Kāṇḍas is available. The Bhāṣya on Kāṇḍas 5, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 is not available. Besides the Saṃhitās, Sāyaṇabhāṣyas on Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas are available. They are the Bhāṣyas on Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa, Taittirīyāraṇyaka, Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa, Aitareyāraṇyaka, Tāṇḍya-Brāhmaṇa, Ṣaḍviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa, Sāmavidhāna- Brāhmaṇa, Arṣeya-Brāhmaṇa, Devatādhyāya-Brāhmaṇa, Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa, Saṃhitopaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa, Vaṃśa-Brāhmaṇa and Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa.

Thus the greatest contribution towards the interpretation of Vedasaṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas has been by Sāyaṇa.

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1.1.8.6 OTHER BHĀṢYAS ON ṚGVEDĀ

1) KAPĀLI ŚĀSTRINS SIDDHĀÑJANA COMMENTARY

This is a detailed commentary on the first 1400 Mantras, i.e., all the Mantras of the I Aṣṭaka. This commentary follows the spiritual method of interpretation. It is regarded as the esoteric interpretation or symbolic interpretation also. Śrī Aurobindo discovered the symbolism in the Ṛgveda and published his findings in the journal "Arya" during 1914-1918. This is the tradition which Kapāli Śāstrin follows.

According to this tradition the meaning of Mantras is two-fold - the inner and the outer. The inner meaning is the psychological or spiritual one. It is in reality the true meaning. The outer meaning acts as a clock for preserving the inner meaning from exposure to the persons not prepared for that practice.

2) DAYĀNANDA'S ṚGVEDABHĀṢYA

This Bhāṣya is available upto the end of the VI Maṇḍala. It was a remarkable attempt by Svāmi Dayānanda, the founder of the Arya Samaj, to reestablish the Veda as a living religious scripture. Dayānanda took as his basis a free use of old Indian philosophy which he found in the Nirukta. His interpretation is governed by the idea that the Vedas are

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a plenary revelation of religious, ethical and scientific truth, and that its religious teaching is monotheistic and the Vedic gods are the different descriptive names of the One Deity. The Vedic gods are indicative of the powers of him as we see them working in nature. By a true understanding of the meaning of the Vedas we could arrive at all the scientific truths which have been discovered by modern research.

1.1.8.7 Modern study of Veda was founded by Eugene Burnof (1801-1852 A.D.) in Paris. Rudolf Von Roth (1821 - 1895 A.D.) and Friedrich Max Muller (1823 - 1903 A.D.), the two great names in the field of Vedic studies, were his pupils. The publication of St. Petersburg Dictionary (Sanskrit - German) by O. Bohtlingk and R. Roth in 1852 led to a new approach in the interpretation of Veda. When H.H. Wilson translated the whole of Ṛgveda on the lines of Sāyaṇa and considered the Indian commentator as having had a "Knowledge of his text far beyond the pretentions of any European scholar", John Muir and R. Roth call the authority of Sāyaṇa in question.

1) **John Muir** ("Original Sanskrit Texts") did not find any reason in paying such encomium to Sāyaṇa as Wilson did and thought that Sāyaṇa was evidently puzzled. R. Roth ("Zur Litteratur Und Geschichte des Weda", 1846), however, acknowledged that the Indian commentators like Sāyaṇa were dependable guides for the treatises on theology

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and worship. But he was not prepared to believe like Wilson that Sāyaṇa "understood the expressions of the Veda better than any European interpreter." He and his associates "endeavoured to follow the path prepared by philology to derive from texts themselves the sense which they contain, by a juxtaposition of all passages which are cognate in diction or contents."

2) **Herman Grassmann (1809 - 1877 A.D.), Abel Bergaigne (1838 - 1888 A.D.) and Herman Oldenberg (1854 - 1920 A.D.)** followed the "path prescribed by philology" and enriched the path by ascertaining the meanings of Vedic words through comparison with the cognate words in the other Indo-European language. Benfey relied on the comparison of Vedic words with those of Zend Avesta.

3) **Max Muller** (Preface to "Vedic Hymns", S.B.E) found that Sāyaṇa's commentary was at all events rational, except when he depended "on the theology of the Brāhmaṇas and on the etymological fictions of the Nirukta." He felt that those who speak disparagingly of Sāyaṇa did not know how much the European scholars owe to his guidance in effecting their first entrance into "this fortress of Vedic language and Vedic religion." "If, therefore, we can now see further than he could, let us not forget that we are standing on his shoulders."

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4) **Richard Pischel (1849 - 1908 A.D.) and Karl F. Geldner (1852 - 1929 A.D.)** felt that the Veda was purely an Indian document to be interpreted, not with the help of comparative Linguistics or Mythology, but with the Indian material including even modern religion and folklore. Pischel, in particular, felt that the Veda reflected a culture that was not widely different from that of the epic and classical periods. The "Vedische Studien" of Pischel and Geldner made a great appeal.

5) **Louis Renou (1896 - 1966 A.D.)** contributed his studies on Veda in French. His publications throw light on the style, diction, phraseology and literary significance of Vedic hymns. Emphasising the formulaic character of the hymns and seeking clarification by means of external facts, he tried to understand them first and foremost by internal comparison.

1.1.9 QUESTIONS

1. Write an essay on the meaning and classification of Veda and give an account of the extent of Vedic literature.

2. Write an essay on the traditional interpretation of Veda.

3. Give an account of the modern interpretation of Veda.

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APPENDIX - I

Veda - Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads

Veda	Saṃhitā	Brāhmaṇa	Āraṇyaka	Upaniṣad
Ṛgveda	Śākala -1028 Sūktas - 10 Maṇḍalas	Aitareya and Kauśītakī	Aitareya and Kauśītakī	Aitareya and Kauśītakī
Kṛṣṇa-Yajurveda	Kaṭha, Maitrāyaṇīya-4 Kaṇḍa, 54 Prapāthaka, Taittirīya-7 Aṣṭaka, 44 Prapāthaka and 651 Anuvāka	Taittirīya	Taittirīya	Kaṭha, Śvetāśvatara, Maitrāyaṇīya, Mahānārāyaṇīya, Taittirīya
Śukla-Yajurveda	Vājasaneyī - 40 Adhyāyas, 303 Anuvākas	Śatapatha	Bṛhadā-raṇyaka	Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Īśāvāsya
Sāmaveda	Ārcikā - 585 Mantra, Uttarārcikā - 964 Mantra	Tāṇḍya, Talavakāra, Chāndogya, Sāmavidhāna, Devatādhyāya Vaṃśa, Saṃhitopaniṣad, Ārṣeya, Mantra	Chāndogya	Chāndogya, Kēna
Atharva-veda	20 Kāṇḍa - 731 Sūkta	Gopatha	-	Muṇḍaka, Praśṇa, Māṇḍūkya

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UNIT - 2

VEDIC LITERATURE

ṚGVEDASAṂHITĀ - 1

1.2.1 Introduction

1.2.2 Objectives

1.2.3 Importance of the study of the Ṛgveda

1.2.4 Arrangement of the Ṛgveda

1.2.5 Views on the date of Ṛgveda

1.2.5.1 Theories based on literary considerations :

i) Max Muller

ii) W.D. Whitney

1.2.5.2 Theories based on astronomical calculations :

i) Haug

ii) Jacobi and Tilak

1.2.6 Questions

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UNIT - 2

VEDIC LITERATURE

ṚGVEDASAṂHITĀ - 1

1.2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Ṛgveda is indisputably the oldest and the most important of all the works of the Vedic literature. It is a collection of hymns addressed to various deities such as Agni, Indra, Varuṇa, Rudra, Uṣas etc., who are mainly the personifications of the powers of nature. The majority of them are religious lyrics. There are some hymns of secular content, which are collected mainly in the tenth Maṇḍala. Some hymns contain philosophical content. It is not, as some scholars like kaegi believe, a collection of primitive popular poetry, but a body of hymns far advanced in metrical skill and content, bringing out a vision of various gods who are invoked to the various sacrifices to receive the oblations of ghee and Soma, and also revealing the social customs, literary pursuits, sports and passtime of the ancient Hindus.

1.2.2 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the present Unit is to give an

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account of the topics pertaining to the importance of the study of the Ṛgvedasaṃhitā, its arrangement and the views on its date. In the subsequent Units it is intended to acquaint the students with the variety of contents of the Ṛgveda and encourage them to trace the history of the various disciplines of Indian studies, such as Sociology, Economics, Political Science, Linguistics, Comparative Mythology, Religious Practices etc.,

1.2.3 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF THE ṚGVEDA

The Ṛgveda is the earliest monument of religious and poetical importance in the world. We find in it the earliest Indian poetry. Since the gods invoked in the Ṛgvedic hymns are the personifications of the phenomena of nature, the hymns of the nature of devotional lyrics contain much beautiful and even noble imagery. The diction of them is simple and unaffected. Thus as providing an ancient and yet refreshing model of Indian poetry, Ṛgveda attracts the attention of all. For instance, the hymns addressed to Uṣas has been regarded as the best specimens of nature poetry. A.T. Embree has brought out the special appeal in these hymns when he says : "The descriptions of the beauty of early morning show the sensitivity of the ancient Indian people to the natural world" (Indian Tradition, p. 15). Macdonell regards Uṣas as the "most graceful creation, the charm of which is unsurpassed in the descriptive religious

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lyrics of any other literature." (Sanskrit Literature, p. 66). Other hymns, too, have been appealing by their sublimity and spiritual loftiness. "The songs to Varuṇa", says Winternitz, "are indisputably among the sublimest and loftiest poetry." (A History of Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 72).

Similarly, the roots of Indian Philosophy can be traced in the Ṛgveda. The Sūktas such as Puruṣasūkta, Hiraṇyagarbhasūkta, Nāsadīyasūkta etc., contain thoughts about the origin of the world and the conception of Puruṣa as the Primeval Being, who is called by other names such as Viśvakarman, Hiraṇyagarbha, Prajāpati, "Sat". This conception has flowered into the concept of Brāhmaṇ in the Upaniṣads. These hymns which are called cosmogonic hymns, "are not only the precursors of Indian Philosophy, but also of the Purāṇas, one of the main objects of which is to describe the origin of the world." (Sanskrit Literature, Macdonell, p. 117).

Apart from being the model of ancient Indian poetry and being the original inspiration for Indian philosophy, the Ṛgveda has influenced all aspects of Indian life and all disciplines of Indian study. To know the most ancient form of Hindu religion, the thoughts of which are still persisting in some form or the other, Ṛgveda is an indispensable source-book. Social and ethical values, mysticism, religious and other duties of Indians, thoughts about Indian polity

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and economy, in short, everything that Indian has its roots in the Ṛgveda. All the hymns called as secular hymns due to their secular content, have the traces of all these Indian disciplines of study. Dramatic and epic poetry in Sanskrit have their roots in the Dialogue hymns. Ṛv. X. 117 which is a collection of maxims, gives a glimps of Subhāṣita poetry and ethical values. Asyāvāmīyasūkta (I.164) gives an idea of ancient symbolism and mysticism, which have their impact on Indian thinking. Sūryāsūkta (X.85) and Funeral hymns (X. 14-18) throw light on the social practices of ancient Indian, which have persisted through the ages and which are still in vogue in the contemporary society.

The study of Ṛgveda is also inevitable to know the ancient history of the Indian people. There are some hymns which can be called as Aitihāsikasūktas due to the fact that they contain historical information. It is possible to build a history of those ancient times with the help of those hymns. Dānastutis mention the family heritage of some kings, and their heroic exploits. The 18th, 19th 33rd Sūktas of the 7th Maṇḍala are important from this point of view. It is said in the 33rd Sūkta that there was "Dāśarājñayuddha" in which Sudāsa won with the help of Vasiṣṭha.

Max Muller in his work "India - What can it teach us" adds a point here by saying that the study of Ṛgveda is of great importance for the elucidation of the history of the world, because it fills a gap which no other work in the

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world can fill. It takes us back to those times of which there are no records elsewhere. Thus the study of Ṛgveda is inevitable not only for the knowledge of the history of ancient Indian people but also for the elucidation of the history of the world.

As a result of the study of the Ṛgveda is particular, two disciplines of learning called comparative Mythology and Comparative Philology. These two branches of study started in the middle of 19th Century A.D. Due to the study of comparative Mythology, the original relation between the Indian deities and the western deities came to light. For instance, the French deity called Fors-Fortuna, who is regarded as the daughter of Zeus and as the bringer of good or bad fortune, has her correspondance with Uṣas of Indian Mythology who is also called as the daughter of Dyaus and who is regarded as the bringer of fortune to the worshippers. The study of Comprative Philology reveals the relation among Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Iranian, German etc. The study leads us to the conclusion that these are sister languages which can be traced to a common mother language called Indo-European.

1.2.4 ARRANGEMENT OF THE ṚGVEDA

There are in all 1028 Sūktas in the Ṛgveda. They include the eleven Vālakhilya-Sūktas (supplementary Sūktas)

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that are found in the 8th Maṇḍala. These Sūktas have been arranged under certain principles.

We find two kinds of arrangement of the Sūktas in the Ṛgveda. The first arrangement is on the basis of Maṇḍalas and Sūktas and the second arrangement is on the basis of Aṣṭaka, Adhyāya and Varga. The second arrangement is a later one made for the convenience of the learners of Veda. Aṣṭaka means a collection of eight Adhyāyas. Ṛgveda is divided into 8 Aṣṭakas. It means that it has in all 64 Adhyāyas. Each Adhyāya has several Vargas. A Varga means a section of five or six Mantras. It constitutes a day's lesson to be learnt by rote. Earlier than this is the arrangement into Maṇḍalas and Sūktas. According to this arrangement the Ṛgveda has 10 Maṇḍalas. The number of Sūktas in these Maṇḍalas varies from 43 to 191. The first and the tenth Maṇḍalas have the same number of Sūktas, which is 191. While referring to the Ṛgveda, the writers follow this arrangement and give three numbers, the first representing the number of the Maṇḍala, the second the number of the Sūkta and the third the number of the Mantra. Some special features of this arrangement are noted below :

Among the ten Maṇḍalas, the six Maṇḍalas from 2nd to 7th have some uniformity. Some common principles of arrangement have been followed in them. Those six Maṇḍalas contain Sūktas of the Ṛṣis belonging to particular families. They contain Sūktas of the Ṛṣis of Gṛtsamada,

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Viśvāmitra, Vāmadeva, Atri, Bhāradvāja and Vasiṣṭha families respectively. Hence those six are called Vaṃśīya-Maṇḍalas. In each of these Maṇḍalas, the first group of hymns are those of Agni, the second group are those of Indra, and the rest are those of other deities. Again within the group of hymns of each deity, the hymns are arranged in such a way as the Sūktas with more number of Mantras come first and those of lesser number of Mantras come gradually later. For instance, in the second Maṇḍala, the first of the Agnisūktas contains 16 Mantras. The numbers of Mantras in the subsequent Sūktas are gradually less with the last Sūkta of the group containing only 6 Mantras. The order of these Vaṃśīya-Maṇḍalas, too, depends on the gradual increase in the number of Sūktas. Thus the second Maṇḍala has 43 Sūktas, the third has 64, the sixth has 75 Sūktas and the seventh has 104.

The first, 8th and 10th Maṇḍalas follow different principles of arrangement. These cannot be called as Vaṃśīya Maṇḍalas. The Sūktas of the Ṛṣis belonging to different families are collected in them. The first fifty hymns of the first Maṇḍala belong to the Ṛṣis of the different families. Among these those belonging to the Ṛṣis of the Kāṇva family are more. In the latter part (51st Sūkta onwards) has nine groups of Sūktas belonging to nine different Ṛṣis. In the 8th Maṇḍala also the Sūktas belonging to the Ṛṣis of Kāṇva form the majority. It looks like a Vaṃśīya Maṇḍala, but differs from other Vaṃśīya Maṇḍalas

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in not beginning with the group of Agni hymns. In the 10th Maṇḍala, again, the Sūktas belong to the Ṛṣis of different families. Many of the Ṛṣis known in the other Maṇḍalas figure here as the "Mantradraṣṭṛ-s".

The 9th Maṇḍala differs from all the other Maṇḍalas. It contains Sūktas addressed to one deity only, i.e., those addressed to Pavamāna Soma. This is the speciality of the 9th Maṇḍala. The "Mantradraṣṭṛ-s" are the same Ṛṣis who figure in the Vaṃśīya Maṇḍalas. There is not even a Sūkta addressed to Pavamāna Soma in the Vaṃśīya Maṇḍalas. There are only three Sūktas addressed to Pavamāna Soma in the first and 10th Maṇḍalas. It is clear from this that all the hymns addressed to Pavamāna Soma are removed from the other Maṇḍalas and are collected in one Maṇḍala for the use of the Udgātṛ priest. The rest of the Mantras are for the Hotṛ.

Considering this arrangment of the Maṇḍalas in the Ṛgveda, the modern scholars come to the conclusion that the six Vaṃśīya Maṇḍalas formed the nucleus to which other Maṇḍalas were added later. The basis of their conclusion is the fact that those six Maṇḍalas have some common principles of arrangement. Since the nine groups of hymns in the latter part of the first Maṇḍala have the same principles of arrangement found in the Vaṃśīya Maṇḍalas, it is assumed that this latter part of the first Maṇḍala was added next. Then it is possible that the 8th Maṇḍala which has the predominance of the hymns of the Kāṇva family was

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added. This was followed by the first part of 50 hymns of the first Maṇḍala which has the hymns of the Kāṇva family in majority. Then the ninth Maṇḍala might have been annexed as the collection of all hymns addressed to Pavamāna Soma. Lastly the tenth Maṇḍala was added. These are, indeed, commendable guesses. But these guesses cannot taken as indisputable.

1.2.5 VIEWS ON THE DATE OF ṚGVEDA

The question of the date of Ṛgveda is of great importance from the point of view of the chronology of the vast Indian Literary Tradition. The Sūktas of Ṛgveda and some of those of the Atharvaveda belong to the most ancient period of Indian literary history. Since the date of Ṛgveda is the upper limit for the date of all Vedic literature, any conclusion on it is of far-reaching consequence in settling the chronology of Vedic literature in particular and that of the Indian literature in general.

This is as far as the Indian literary tradition is concerned. The importance of the date of Ṛgveda does not rest with this only. Considering Vedic texts, especially the Ṛgveda as the oldest records of human civilisation, Winternitz says - "Only when we fix chronologically the oldest testimonials of Aryan cultrue in India can we draw conclusions about the period of development of

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Indo-Iranian and further of the Indo-Germanic culture." (Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 270).

But unfortunately, the question of the date of Ṛgveda is a vexed problem. Both the Western and Indian scholars have put forward their views about the date of Ṛgveda. It should be admitted "that the opinions of best researchers in the matter of the age of the Ṛgveda differ not by a few centuries, but by a few thousands of years, that some put the lower limit for the Ṛgvedic hymns at the year 1000 B.C., whereas others put it somewhere between 3000 B.C. and 2500 B.C." (Indian Literature; Winternitz, Vol. I, p. 270).

The views put forward as regards the date of Ṛgveda fall into two groups as - i) Theories based on literary considerations (language and diction) and ii) Theories based on Astronomical calculations. First group of theories are taken up first here :

1.2.5.1 THEORIES BASED ON LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS :

Among the theories based on language and dictions the first one is the theory put forward by Max Muller.

MAX MULLER

The theory of Max Muller on the date of Ṛgveda is

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well-known. He divided the date of the ancient literature into four periods as 1) Chandas, 2) Mantra, 3) Brāhmaṇa and 4) Sūtra. Each of the periods succeeds in this order and each of the following one presupposes the existance of the previous one. The Sūtra period is the last among them. During this period, the most important names are those of Śaunaka and Kātyāyana. Ṣaḍguruśiṣya, in his commentary on the Anukramaṇika of Kātyāyana, has mentioned four generations of teachers in the order of Śaunaka, Āśvalāyana, Kātyāyana and Patāñjali. Among these Kātyāyana is identified with Vararuci. Somadeva, in his Kathāsaritsāgara has said that Vararuci was a minister under the Nandas of Pātaliputra. The rule of the nandas was brought to an end by Chandragupta Maurya and the rule of the latter extended from 321 B.C. to 297 B.C. On the basis of this evidence Vararuci's (i.e., Kātyāyana's) date is decided to be 325 B.C. Calculating on these lines, Max Muller came to the conclusion that Āśvalāyana's date was 359 B.C. and Śaunaka's was 490 B.C. Thus he assigns the date of Sūtras as extending backwards from 200 B.C. to 600 B.C. Sūtra literature presupposes the Brāhmaṇa literature, which thus extended still backwards from 600 B.C. to 800 B.C. The period of Mantra literature which is presupposed by the Brāhmaṇa literature, extended still backwards from 800 B.C. to 1000 B.C. Finally, the period of Chandas which is presupposed by the Mantra period, extended from 1000 B.C. to 1200 B.C. The period of Chandas is the period of

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the Ṛgveda. Hence the beginning or upper limit of the date of Ṛgveda is 1200 B.C. This is the theory of Max Muller.

Although this theory looks credible superficially, it is replete with lacunae right from the beginning. Firstly the whole super-structure of this theory is based on an imaginery ground of identity between Kātyāyana and Vararuci. This identity is not proved beyond doubt. Further it may be asked as to what is the ground for deciding the duration of 200 years for each of the periods. Why only 200 years ? Why not 500 or 1000 years ? These question naturally shoot up. From the point of view of language growth 200 years is too small a period. The extent of literature available on each of branches is so vast that even thousand years would not be sufficient for its growth.

Winternitz's observation is illuminating here : "Now it is clear that the presumption of 200 years for each of the literary epochs in the birth of the Veda is purely arbitrary." (Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 273). Yet this theory received great support from the Western scholars. Even W.D. Whitney (Oriental and Linguistic Studies, p. 78 quoted in Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 273, f.n.2) said that Max Muller has proved 1200 to 1000 B.C. to be the date of the Ṛgveda. As noted by Winternitz. (Ibid. p. 273). L. Van Schroeder dared to go beyond 1500 to 2000 B.C. as the date of Ṛgveda only hesitantly. When H. Jacobi pushed back the date of

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Rgveda to 4500 B.C. on the basis of astronomical calculation, "a hue and cry was raised by the scholars against such a heretic step" (Winternitz; Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 273). "It was strange by forgotten", says Winternitz, (Ibid. p. 273), "on how weak a footing 'the prevailing view' actually stood which they tried to defend so vigorously."

Whatever might be the attempt made by others to defend that theory, Max Muller himself was not sure of his own theory, as it is clear from what he said in his Gifford Lectures in 1889 - "Whether the Vedic hymns were composed in 1000 or 1500 or 2000 or 3000 B.C. no power on earth will ever determine."

W.D. WHITNEY

Following more or less the line of argument set forth by Max Muller, W.D. Whitney decided the date of Rgveda as extending backwards from 1500 B.C. to 2000 B.C. Since the very attempt of considering the matter of the growth of ancient language and diction on par with the growth of modern languages and diction is itself a wrong one, this theory of Whitney also does not deserve serious attention.

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1.2.5.2 THEORIES BASED ON ASTRONOMICAL CALCULATIONS :

HAUG

Among the theories based on astronomical calculations, the first one was put forward by Haug. On the basis of a statement in the Jyotiṣa, referring to "Ayanānta" point, Haug made astronomical calculations and came to the conclusion that the date of the Saṃhitās extended backwards from 1400 B.C. and that the date of Ṛgveda goes still farther back from 2000 B.C. to 2400 B.C.

JACOBI AND BALAGANGADHARA TILAK

The attempts of Jacobi and Tilak were on the parallel lines independent of each other. In 1899 they worked simultaneously, one (i.e., Jacobi) at Bonn and the other (i.e., Tilak) in Bombay and proceeded with their astronomical calculations in their own way and came more or less to the same conclusion. The conclusion they came to was that during the time of the Brāhmaṇas the Pleiades (Kṛttika constellation) which form the starting point of the Nakṣatra series, coincided with the spring-equinox (Mahāviṣuva or Meṣarāśi). This is according to the calenders traced in the Brāhmaṇas. But according to an older calender traced in Vedic texts (Saṃhitās), the spring-equinox coincided with the Orion (Mṛgaśiras). This change of the Mahāviṣuva (Spring or Vernal equinox) from Pleiades to Orion takes

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2000 years. Taking the phenomenon of the coinciding of Vernal equinox with Pleiades as belonging to 2500 B.C. (i.e., during the period of Brāhmaṇas), Jacobi assigns the phenomenon of the Vernal equinox's coinciding with the Orion to 4500 B.C., which according to him is the date of the Ṛgveda. Tilak does not rest with this. He takes the date of the Ṛgveda further back to 6000 B.C.

Jacobi further strengthened his view by a second astronomical observation. In the Gṛhya-Sūtras, as he has rightly noticed, there is the mention of a marriage custom according to which the bridegroom showed to his bride the pole star (i.e., the Druva-Nakṣatra) in the North. On the basis of astronomical calculations, Jacobi came to the conclusion that such a brilliant star as Dhruva existed in 2780 B.C. If this is the date of the Gṛhyasūtras, the date of Ṛgveda should go further back by thousands of years.

When these views of Jacobi and Tilak were put forward, they met with "violent opposition". It was objected on the ground that the Indians of the ancient times were concerned only with the position of the Nakṣatras in relation to the moon but not to the sun. The opposition depended on this argument and on other argument that the passage (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, II.1.2.3) in which there is reference to Pleaides, should probably be interpreted in a different way. The argument of the pole star also provoked serious objection on the ground that possibility of one of the lesser

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stars being visible as the pole star by about 1250 B.C. and even later cannot be denied.

Although the astronomical arguments of Jacobi and Tilak met with such objection, those who objected could not deny the possibility of deciding further antiquity for the Ṛgveda. The theories of Jacobi and Tilak succeeded at least in stimulating an enquiry into those and other grounds for assuming a greater antiquity for the Ṛgveda. Here is a balanced view of Winternitz : "From the point of view of Indian history there is no argument against the presumption that the Vedic literature reached as far back as the third millenium and the ancient Indian culture upto the fourth millenium (B.C.), whereas the suggestion of 1200 or even 1500 B.C. made by Max Muller for the beginning of the Vedic period is not compatible anymore with the present state of our knowledge about the political history as well as the literary and religious history of ancient India." (Indian Literature, Vol. I, p. 278).

These theories on the date of the Ṛgveda reflect the complicated nature of the problem and the efforts of the scholars probe into the mystery of it. The theories based on astronomical calculations like those of Jacobi and Tilak are more reliable than those based on the considerations of language and diction. Jacobi and Tilak have come to the conclusion that the date of Ṛgveda cannot be later than 4500 B.C. on the basis of astronomical calculations. Taking all

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the views into consideration, it can be stated that the lower limit of the date of Vedic literature cannot be later than 800 B.C. Although the attempts at deciding the upper limit which happens to be the date of the Ṛgveda have not been fully settled, Jacobi and Tilak have taken firm steps in that direction. But the upper limit cannot by any standards as late as 1200 B.C.

1.2.6 QUESTIONS

1. Write an essay on the importance of the study of the Ṛgveda.

2. Give an account of the arrangement of the Ṛgveda and the principles underlying it.

3. Set forth clearly the theories on the date of the Ṛgveda with your comments.

4. **Write notes on :**

   i) वंशीयमण्डलानि।

   ii) नवममण्डलस्य वैशिष्ट्यम्

   iii) Comparative Mythology

   iv) Comparative Philology

   v) Jacobi and Tilak on the date of Ṛgveda

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UNIT - 3

VEDIC LITERATURE

ṚGVEDASAṂHITĀ - 2

1.3.1 Introduction

1.3.2 Objectives

1.3.3 Contents of the Ṛgveda

1.3.4 Religious hymns of the Ṛgveda

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1.3.7 Deities of Pṛthvisthāna

Agni, Soma, Pṛthivī

1.3.8 Deities of Antarikṣasthāna

Indra, Vāyu, Parjanya, Āpaḥ,

Apāṃ, Napāt, Rudra, Maruts

1.3.9 Deities of Dyusthāna

Varuṇa, Mitra, Sūrya, Savitṛ, Pūṣan,

Viṣṇu, Ādityas, Uṣas, Aśvins

1.3.10 Questions

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UNIT - 3

VEDIC LITERATURE

ṚGVEDASAṂHITĀ - 2

1.3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit, some topics like the Importance of the Study of Ṛgveda, Arrangement of the Ṛgveda and the Theories regarding the Date of Ṛgveda, have been presented. The present Unit will introduce the contents of the Ṛgveda and go on to deal with the Religious Hymns of the Ṛgveda which form the majority, highlighting the Religion of the Ṛgveda, the Deities, their Classification and their Characteristic in brief.

1.3.2 OBJECTIVES

The Ṛgveda is the earliest source of knowing the ancient Indian people and their religion. It is this religion that was at the threshold of Indian Civilization and later religious practices, the deities and forms of worship are all modelled on that religion. Although in their outer garb all of them appear modified or changed, sacrificial form of worship lingering in some form and yielding place also to new forms of worship, some gods of the Vedic pantheon

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having been relegated to background and some gods, Śiva and Viṣṇu in particular, who were not so important in the Vedic pantheon, occupying a major position and forms of worship undergoing changes with the substractions of older ones and additions of newer items, yet in the core of them they have the spirit of Vedic religion consisting in the principle of Unity and Diversity. Hence to know Ṛgvedic religion is to know the roots of Hindu religion which have stood the test of times.

1.3.3 CONTENTS OF THE ṚGVEDA

It should be again noted here that the majority of the hymns of the Ṛgveda are connected with the worship of gods through sacrifices. There are some hymns which gives an account of the ancient forms of marriage, funeral practices, sports, passtime and such secular matters. There are still other Sūktas which contain reflections on the origin of the world and such philosophical matters. Taking all these contents into consideration, they can be subjected to the classification into three groups as -

i) Religious hymns,

ii) Secular hymns and

iii) Philosophical hymns

In the present Unit, the Religious hymns and the

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allied matters are highlighted briefly, leaving the treatment of the other two to the subsequent Unit or Units.

1.3.4 RELIGIOUS HYMNS OF THE ṚGVEDA

The majority of the hymns of the Ṛgveda are religious hymns. They are the hymns that have a "Viniyoga" (application or use) in the sacrificial ceremonies which culminate in the offerings of ghee or Soma as the oblation. While invoking the gods to the sacrifices to receive those oblation, these hymns in praise of them are recited. The hymns contain prayers for cows, wealth, long life and heroic sons. Since these hymns praise a number of gods with characteristic of their own, a question that arises at the outset is as to whether the Religion of the Ṛgveda is Polytheism ("Ekadevatopāsanātmaka"). Again as some scholars raise with some of their notions, there is the question whether Ṛgvedic religion is a religion of the primitive, semi-barbaric people or that of advanced people. Again in focussing the salient features of Ṛgvedic gods, some methods of classification of gods are attempted from the ancient times (of Yāska and even earlier) down to the modern times (of Bloomfield and others). Hence, as a background to the study of the gods of the Ṛgvedic pantheon and their salient features as well as relation with each other, it is now necessary to discuss about the religion of the Ṛgveda.

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1.3.5 RELIGION OF THE ṚGVEDA

It must be noted at the outset that the religion of the Ṛgveda is considerably advanced. It was the religion of a noble race (Āryas) who had reached a higher peak of civilization and sufficiently advanced culture. Hence what Rudolf Keigi said about Vedic religion as "very primitive, Vedic people being semi-barbarious, childlike and innocent" (Der Ṛgveda) is totally baseless. We find in the Vedic hymns very evidently the skill of using various metres, an advanced outlook in visualising the scenes of nature, ideological advancement, poetic abilities, philosophical depth, etc. All these highlight Ṛgvedic religion as the religion of the advanced people.

The outstanding feature of this religion has in the worship of gods through sacrifice. The worship and the aspiration for the reward being mutually related, this religion appears outwardly utilitarion (Prayojanoddiṣṭa) in outlook. In all the religious hymns there is reference to the offering of oblations (of ghee or Soma) by the Ṛṣis who in return for them aspire from gods the granting of long life, wealth in the form of cows and grains, heroic sons, etc. Instead of immortality and liberation, those ancient people were seeking from gods long and prosperous life of full hundred years. There seems to be no traces of the idea of renunciation or retirement which is so prevalent in the Upaniṣads. Yet on this ground, it should not be depicted that

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the Ṛgvedic people were of materialistic outlook (Cārvākadṛṣṭi). Those people were, indeed, of the attitude of living with a philosophical outlook amidst the achievements of joys and prosperity in the mundane life.

It should be noted here again that the Ṛgveda is essentially a collection of hymns addressed to different deities who are the personifications of the powers of nature. These hymns are employed in the sacrifices at the time of offering oblations of Soma or ghee. Thus they appear to be related to the worship of the different deities such as Agni, Indra, Varuṇa etc. Besides these hymns eulogising the different individual deities, there are some hymns coming at intervals which depict one Supreme God called by different names such as Puruṣa, Sat, Hiraṇyagarbha, Viśvakarma etc.

Thus to a superficial view, it appears that the religion of the Ṛgveda was polytheistic in nature. But it is actually a religion which was Monotheistic in outlook. Here the worship of the different deities is the worship of the different powers one Supreme God only. Again it is observed by Max Mueller that there was intermediary period traceable in the Ṛgveda between the stages of Polytheism and Monotheism and that such a stage was represented by what he called Henotheism or Kathenotheism, which consisted in highlighting one god at a time as the Supreme God by turns. Thus it has to be described that the Ṛgvedic religion began with Polytheism

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and finally reached the mature stage of Monotheism by passing through a stage of highlighting different gods alternatively as the Supreme God each at a time. It may be described like this. For this there is the problem of tracing the stages of such developments. To use a phrase of Vācaspati Miśra in translation, tracing these stages of Polytheism to Monotheism through the stage of Henotheism is like tracing "the footsteps of birds in the air". The Indian mind is prone then and even now to finding unity in diversity. As hinted by the Ṛgvedic statement "EKaṃ Sad Viprā Bahudhā Vadanti", the Supreme God is one only and the different gods are nothing but the different powers of that Supreme God. If this is stated as the core of Ṛgvedic religion, it would be inkeeping with the mentality of the Indian people.

Although Ṛgveda eulogises many gods, they are never looked upon as "unequal". All the gods are looked upon as equal endowed with a full-fledged form and all auspicious qualities, free from all defects. The Ṛgveda is explicit about this :

"युवां देवास्त्रयएकादशासः सत्याः सत्यस्य दद्दशे पुरस्तात्।।"

(Ṛv. 8.57.2)

"अज्येष्ठासो अकनिष्ठास एते।" (Ṛv. 5.60.5)

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This clearly shows that the thirty-three (Traya-Ekādaśāsaḥ) are true and visualise the truth infront and that neither of them is superior or inferior (Ajyeṣṭhāsaḥ, Akaniṣṭhāsaḥ). Such being the outlook of the Ṛgveda it is difficult to say how Max Mueller thought of alternative consideration of supremacy of gods, each at a time, by calling it by the term "Henotheism", which he himself coined. Final nail can be struck to the coffin of this theory by quoting the following statements from the Ṛgveda itself :

"इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान्।

एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति अग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः।।"

(Ṛv. 1.164.46)

"एक एवाग्निर्बहुधा समिद्धः एंकस्सूर्यो विश्वमनुप्रभूतः।

एकैवोषाः सर्वमिदं विभात्येकं वा इदं विबभूव सर्वम्।।"

(Ṛv. 7.58.2)

"सुपर्णं विप्राः कवयो वचोभिः एकं सन्तं बहुधा कल्पयन्ति।।"

(Ṛv. 10.114.5)

"त्वमग्ने अदितिर्देव दाशुषे त्वं होत्रा भारती वर्धसे गिरा।

त्वमिळा शतहिमासि दक्षसे त्वं वृत्रहा वसुपते सरस्वती।।"

(Ṛv. 2.1.11)

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The following statements show how this idea is confirmed again and again in tradition :

"एक आत्मा बहुधा स्तूयते" (Yāska, Nirukta, 7.4.8)

"एकस्यात्मनः अन्ये देवाः प्रत्यङ्गानि भवन्ति।" (Ibid. 7.4.9)

"तस्मात्सर्वैरपि परमेश्वर एव हूयते।।"

(Sāyaṇa, Ṛgbhāṣyabhūmikā)

The concept of Viśvedevas (depicted in 40 hymns of the Ṛv.) is a definite pointer to the outlook of our ancestors.

1.3.6 CLASSIFICATION OF DEITIES OF ṚGVEDA

In this religion which has the outward appearance of the worship of many deities and yet which has the conception of one Supreme God as its core, the gods who are worshipped are the personifications of the powers of nature. If we listen to their descriptions made by the sages in the hymns, we feel as if those gods are taking shape before our eyes. That is, in the hymns describing the various deities, however, their personalities have grown to such an extent as it is not possible to recognise what original natural phenomena they represented. Among such deities, Indra and Varuṇa are very important. The western scholars call such gods as "Opaque Gods" in their classification. When we see the description of such gods as Agni, Parjanya, Uṣas etc., it is possible to identify them as "Transparent Gods",

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because in the development of their personality, their original natural phenomena is never lost sight of. There are also cases of some gods through the superimposition of a personality on some abstract ideas. Savitṛ is an example of that.

With this point of view, Bloomfield has classified the deities of the Ṛgveda into Pre-historic (Caritrapūrva), Transparent (Pāradarśaka), Translucent (Ardhapāradarśaka), Opaque (Apāradarśaka) and Abstract (Amūrta) or Symbolic (Sāṅketika) gods. Religion of the Veda, p. 96). In this connection, the observation of Peterson is very illuminating : "It is not certain which gods have to be relegated to the Pre-historic period, a god may be Transparent, Translucent or Opaque just as the interpretations offered are accepted or rejected." (Hymns from the Ṛgveda, Bombay, 1922, Appendix IV - p. LXXIV). From another point of view, i.e., from the point of historical development, the gods are classified into Indo-European, Indo-Irani and Hindu.

In the Indian tradition the classification of gods on the basis of regions (Sthānabheda) seems to have universal acceptance :

"तिस्र एव देवता इति नैरुक्ताः। अग्निः पृथिवीस्थानः।

वायुर्वेन्द्रो अन्तरिक्षस्थानः। सूर्यो द्युस्थानः।" (Nirukta, 7.5)

"According to the etymologists gods are threefold. Agni belongs to terrestrial region. Vāyu or Indra belongs to

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the atmospheric region. Sūrya belongs to heavenly region." Thus Ṛgvedic gods are classified as Pṛthivīsthana (terrestrial), Antarikṣasthāna (atmospheric) and Dyusthāna (heavenly). This classification has the basis in the Ṛgveda :

"ये देवासो दिव्येकादश स्थ पृथिव्यामेकादश स्थ।

अप्सुक्षितो महिनैकादशस्थ ते देवासो यज्ञमिमं जुषध्वम्।।"

(Ṛv. 1.139.11)

According to this classification, Agni, Soma and Pṛthivī are the deities of Pṛthivīsthāna, Indra, Apaṃ Napāt, Rudra, Maruts, Vāyu, Parjanya, Āpas are those of Antarikṣasthāna, and Dyauḥ, Varuṇa, Mitra, Sūrya, Savitṛ, Pūṣan, Aśvins, Uṣas and Rātrī are those of Dyusthāna. It is highly proper to describe Ṛgvedic religion as that which has as its aim the sense of fulfilment by living a life that is good and prosperous, winning over the grace of gods through the performance of sacrifices.

1.3.7 DEITIES OF PṚTHIVĪSTHĀNA

Agni : Among the deities of Pṛthivīsthāna, Agni is important. About 200 Sūktas have been addressed to him. He is also praised along with other deities in other hymns. He is described to have three births - one as the submarine fire in the ocean, the second as Āditya in heaven ad third as Vaidyutāgni (lightning) in the atmosphere :

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"त्रीणि जाना परिभूषन्त्यस्य समुद्र एकं दिव्येकमप्सु।"

(Ṛv. 1.95.3)

He is mainly depicted as Yājakāgni (sacrificial fire). He is born of the "Araṇis". As a presiding deity of the sacrifice, he is called Ṛtvik, Purohita, Hotā.

"अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम्।

होतारं रत्नधातमम्।।" (Ṛv. 1.1.1)

He is the Hotṛ of both gods and men. He is a close relative of men. He is the father, a relative, he is the mother; he is the brother; he is the friend -

"अग्निं मन्ये पितरमग्निमापिम् भ्रातरं सदमित्सखायम्।"

(Ṛv. 10.7.3)

Yāska derives the word Agni as "अग्रणीर्भवति" (Nirukta, 7.14.4). It means that Agni is the leader. He should be first pleased by all in the sacrifice. He is the protector of "ऋत" in sense of "sacrificial order."

Soma : Among the sacrifices that are propounded in the Veda. Soma sacrifice is the most important. Hence Soma is an important deity. Among the Ṛgvedic deities, it is Soma who comes after Indra and Agni. The 114 Sūktas of the ninth Maṇḍala (Soma-Maṇḍala) eulogise him. In other places, he is glorified in some Mantras of four or five Sūktas. He is also praised along with Indra, Agni, Pūṣan,

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Rudra etc. Giving the designation of Indu or Soma he is invited to accept the oblations in the sacrifices. Soma plant is the residing place (Adhisthāna) of Soma. Soma converts the mortals into immortals and takes them to the blissful worlds. He is the presiding deity of "intellect" (Buddhi). With the power derived from the drinking of Soma, Indra kills all the enemies, especially Vṛtra. In the Ṛgveda itself, he is identified with Candra (Indu) - "यो अप्सु चन्द्रमा इव सोमश्चमूषु ददृशे।" (Ṛv. 8.82.8).

Pṛthvī : Ṛgveda contains only one Sūkta dedicated to Pṛthvī separately. This deity is praised along with Dyauḥ (as द्यावापृथिवी) in 6 Sūktas. Pṛthvī and Dyauḥ are never separate. Pṛthvī in particular is the support of all the beings. By virtue of her greatness only, all the beings live. She provides food for all. Yāska derives the name Pṛthvī from "Pṛthudarśanāt", the deity stands for expansion and greatness. Mountain, forests, flowers and fruits, the plants, the rivers depend on her. She is "Sarvaṃsahā" and "Vasundharā". With Dyauḥ, she happens to constitute the parenthood of the world of beings.

1.3.8 DEITIES OF ANTARIKṢASTHĀNA

Indra : In Ṛgveda, Indra is next only to Agni in importance. The hymns addressed to Indra form the largest group in the Ṛgveda. Nearly one-fourth (250) of the hymns

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of the Ṛgveda is addressed to Indra. Indra is the most heroic deity endowed with unparallelled strength in protecting the Āryans and destroying the demons. The most important feats of Indra is the killing of Vṛtra, the demon of draught and the releasing of waters imprisoned by him. For killing Vṛtra he employs the terrible Vajra which was fashioned for him by Tvaṣṭṛ. The waters that flow are likes the cows let loose :

"अहन्नहिं पर्वते शिश्रियाणं त्वष्टास्मै वर्जं स्वर्यं ततक्ष।

वाश्रा इव धेनवः स्यन्दमाना अञ्जः समुद्रमवजग्मुरापः।।"

(Ṛv. 1.32.2)

"He killed the Dragon (Ahi = Vṛtra) who was hiding in the mountain; Tvaṣṭṛ fashioned the sizzling Vajra for him; like the lowing cattle, the flowing waters straight away march towards the ocean." Hence "Vṛtrahan" is a special epithet of Indra. He is called "Vajrabāhu" or "Vajrahasta", or Vajrin. Heaven and Earth cannot measure his great form; he is so gigantic in form :

"यस्य प्रिये ममतुर्यज्ञियस्य न रोदसी महिमानं ममाते।"

(Ṛv. 3.32.7)

Because of his great strength he is Śakra (Ṛv. 8.91.1), Śacīpati (Ṛv. 4.30.17), Śacīvant (Ṛv. 8.91.7) and Śatakratu (Ṛv. 8.91.7). In some places he is called the son of Dyaus. His mother is Aditi. According to some Sūktas, he is the son

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of Tvaṣṭṛ. His wife is called Indrāṇī. Agni is his brother. Maruts are his allies in the battle against Vṛtra "Marutvān" is a special epithet of Indra. He is very fond of Soma drink. Hence is especially called "Somapā.". He is described to have drunk lakes of Soma. He is the destroyer of darkness and bringer of light. He is the protector of Ṛta in the sense of cosmic order.

Vāyu : In Ṛgveda, there are two or three hymns addressed to Vāyu. He is also address in five or six hymns dedicated to other deities. Some times he is called Vāta. It is described that he was produced by Heaven and Earth (Dyāvāpṛthivī) for the prosperity of the world and that he receives eulogies for wealth.

"राये नु यं जज्ञतू रोदसी मे राये देवी धिषणा धाति देवम्"

(Ṛv. 7.90.3)

Like Indra, he is of such a gigantic form as to reach heaven. He is of the speed of mind. Wise Ṛṣis invite him for drinking Soma.

Parjanya : Only three hymns are addressed to Parjanya in the Ṛgveda. The Universe cannot live without rain. The plant wealth depends upon rain. Thus Parjanya is one of nourishing elements of human life. Since he showers rain he is called "Vṛṣabha". He makes the plants to germinate by roaring :

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"कनिक्रदद् वृषभो जीरदानो रेतो दधात्योषधीषु गर्भम्।"

(Ṛv. 5.83.1)

He makes the herbs to grow, makes the waters too increase; and with his great brightness he is the lord of the world.

"यो वर्धन ओषधीनां यो अपां यो विश्वस्य जगतो देव ईशे।"

(Ṛv. 7.101.2)

The main function of Parjanya is to bring rain. He has many messengers employed for shedding rain.

Āpaḥ : Āpaḥ, Waters, are as essential for man as wind. In Ṛgveda, there are only four Sūktas glorifying Āpaḥ. They give rise to Apaṃ Napāt and become mothers :

"आपो अग्निं जनयन्त मातरः।" (Ṛv. 10.91.6)

They appear in different forms to the people and protect them in all ways. This is beautifully depicted here :

या आपो दिव्या उ वास्रवन्ति

खनित्रमा उत वा याः स्वयंजाः।

समुद्रार्था याः शुचयः पावकाः

ताः आपो देवीरिह मामवन्तु।। (Ṛv. 7.49.2)

"The divine waters in the sky, those that flow as rivers on the earth, those that are made to flow in canals and

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those springs that are self born, all these which are bright and sacred are marching towards the ocean. Let those sacred waters protect us." They follow the path of truth formulated by gods. They never transgress the dictates of Indra. Varuṇa enters into them and observes the truth and falsehood of men. Varuṇa is the lord of waters. These are the best prayers to Āpaḥ :

आपो हि ष्ठा मयोभुवः ता न ऊर्जे दधातन।

महेरणाय चक्षसे।।

यो वः शिवतमो रसः तस्य भाजयतेह नः।

उशतीरिव मातरः।। (Ṛv. 10.91.2)

"Since you are bringers of happiness, you give us food. Bless us with lofty and charming knowledge. Like the mothers who desire for the wealth of children, allow us to drink your waters that make us happy."

Apāṃ Napāt : Ṛgveda celebrates Apāṃ Napāt in one Sūkta only. In the hymns addressed to Āpaḥ, he is also praised incidentally. He is of the form of lightning (Vidyut) and is a form of Agni. He is the submarine fire in the womb of the ocean. It is in this form he is called Apāṃ Napāt. He is the son of waters. He is often identified with Agni and in some places he is treated as different from Agni. In this aspect he burns brightly even without fuel. The following description is significant.

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हिरण्यरूपः स हिरण्यसंदृक् अपां नपात्सेदु हिरण्यवर्णः।

हिरण्ययात्परि योनेनिषद्या हिरण्यदा ददात्यन्नमस्मै।।

(Ṛv. 2.35.10)

"The body of Apāṃ Napāt is golden, his senses are golden, his complexion is golden. He rises up from his golden seat and appears to the people. To such a deity the donors of gold offer oblations."

Rudra : Rudra is celebrated in only three Sūktas of the Ṛgveda. He is praised along with Soma in one hymn. Yet his name comes 75 times in the Ṛgveda. As his very name indicates, he is the punishing god in his terrible aspect. At the same time in his benevolent aspect, he is the protector of men by warding off all dangers. In this aspect, he is called Śiva, which name occurs 18 times in the Ṛgveda. He is the giver of happiness; hence, he is called Śiva. His physical form has been described well in the Ṛgveda. He has firm arms and firm hands; he is of brown colour (babhru); he has matted locks and hence, he is called "Kapardin" (Ṛv. 1.114.15). He is of illustrious appearance with many form (Pururupa), bright like the sun, golden in complexion, shining with golden ornaments (Ṛv. 2.33.9). He is one other god who is called "Vajrabāhu" (like Indra). The most significant is this depiction of Indra :

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अर्हन् बिभर्षि सायकानि धन्वा अर्हन्निष्कं यजतं विश्वरूपम्।

अर्हन्निदं दयसे विश्वमभ्वं न वा ओजीयो रुद्र त्वदस्ति।।

(Ṛv. 2.33.10)

"O Rudra, since you are capable, you are wielding the arrows and the bow; capable, indeed you are adorned with a Niṣka (neclace) that is worthy of worship and multi-form; worthy, indeed, you protect this entire Universe. None, O God, is more powerful than you." He is well known as the father of Maruts - "पितर्मरुताम्" (Ṛv. 2.33.1). He is the giver of the most salutary medicines and the best physician among the physicians, "भिषक्तमं त्वा भिषजां शृणोमि।" (Ṛv. 2.33.4).

Maruts : Maruts occupy an important place in the Ṛgvedic pantheon. 33 Sūktas in the Ṛgveda are addressed to the Maruts. They are also praised in other Sūktas along with Agni, Pūṣan and Indra. Their number is mentioned as 21 in Ṛv. 4.133.6 and as 180 in Ṛv. 8.85.8. Ṛv. 2.33 speaks of Maruts as the sons of Rudra and Pṛśni. That is why they have the epithets such as Rudrāḥ, Rudriyāḥ, Pṛśnimātaraḥ, Gomātaraḥ. All the gods of this host are equal - "अज्येष्ठास अकनिष्ठास एते" (Ṛv. 5.60.3). Right from the very birth, they are the brilliant deities like Agni. This is the divine form of Maruts.

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अंसेषु वज्रऋष्टयो पत्सु खादयो वक्षः सु रुक्मा मरुतो रथे शुभः।

अग्निभ्राजसो विद्युतो गभस्त्योः शिप्रा शीर्षसु वितता हिरण्ययीः।।

(Ṛv. 5.54.11)

"O Maruts weapons adorn your shoulders, you have anklets in your feet, golden neclaces on the chests, lightnings that shine like Agni in your hands, golden crowns on your heads and sweet water in you chariots." Such maruts are the allies of Indra in his fight against Vṛtra.

1.3.9 DEITIES OF DYUSTHĀNA

Varuṇa : In Ṛgveda, Varuṇa occupies a place equal to that of Indra. He is praised in 12 hymns. The number of hymns is not the criterion of importance. Even in those 12 hymns, the unparallelled greatness of Varuṇa has been depicted. More than his form and instrument, his activities are described. He is thousand-eyed (Ṛv. 7.34.10); he looks at all the worlds with the world as his eyes (Ṛv. 1.25.5). He cuts the mischief of the demons by the very brilliance of his - "स माया अर्चिना पदास्तृणात्" (Ṛv. 7.41.8). His chariot shines like the sun - "रथो वां मित्रावरुणा दीर्घाप्साः स्यूम गभस्तिः सूरो नाद्यौत्।" (Ṛv. 1.122.15). Varuṇa is very often praised as a twin deity with Mitra. All the descriptions given above are in view of his activities. Varuṇa's station is the highest heaven. He is among the gods one and only "Rājan" - "राजा

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राष्ट्रानां पेशो न दीनाम्" (Ṛv. 7.34.11). The most important feature of Varuṇa which distinguishes him from all other deities, is his activity of guarding Ṛta in the sense of moral order. He is the protector of moral order. He becomes terribly angry towards those who break his ordinances. At the same time he is kind towards those who live according to his ordinances. He also pardons those who repent for their sins. Indra and Varuṇa are contrasted here :

"वृत्राण्यन्यः समिधेषु जिघ्नते व्रतान्यन्यो अभिरक्षते सदा।"

(Ṛv. 7.83.9)

"One (Indra) kills the enemies (Vṛtras) in the battle and the other (Varuṇa) protects the vows for ever." Nothing is beyond his knowledge - "वेदा यो वीनां पदम् अन्तरिक्षेण पताम्। वेद नावः समुद्रियः।।" (Ṛv. 1.25.7) - "He knows the flight of birds in the sky, he knows the paths of the acquatic beings in the ocean." He witnesses the truth and falsehood of all men - "सत्यानृते अवपश्यन् जनानाम्" (Ṛv. 7.49.3). Besides he had his spies all round.

Mitra : Mitra is more often than not praised along with Varuṇa in the Ṛgveda. Only one hymn praises individually in the Ṛgveda. The activities of Mitra are described here :

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मित्रो जनान्यातयति ब्रुवाणो मित्रो दाधार पृथिवीमुतद्याम्।

मित्रः कृष्टीरनिमिषाभिचष्टे मित्राय हव्यं घृतवज्जुहोत।।

(Ṛv. 3.59.1)

"Mitra brings the people together by calling them. Mitra supports firmly the earth and the heaven. Mitra looks on with unwinking eyes and makes the people to engage themselves in the activities such as farming. Offer oblations of ghee to Mitra."

Sūrya : Varuṇa and Mitra depicted above are the two among the solar deities. Sūrya is here as the third solar deity. He is the most important among the solar deities. In Ṛgveda, 10 Sūktas are dedicated to Sūrya. It is described that the lustre of Sūrya who shines in the sky, is like the great facial orb of the Agni - "अग्नेरनीकं बृहतः" (Ṛv. 10.7.3). Sūrya is described as the "eye" of Mitrā-Varuṇa. He is the eye of the gods led by Uṣas - "देवानां चक्षुः सुभगा वहन्ती" (Ṛv. 7.77.3). He is the "Jagaccakṣuṣ". He sees all and sees far and wide. Hence he is called "Viśvacakṣas" (Ṛv. 1.50.2) and "Urucakṣas" (Ṛv. 7.35.8). This is Sūrya at his best :

"उद्वेति सुभगो विश्वचक्षाः साधारणः सूर्यो मानुषाणाम्।

चक्षुर्मित्रस्य वरुणस्य देवः चर्मेव यः समविव्यक्तमांसि।।"

(Ṛv. 7.63.1)

"God Sūrya who is worthy of all praise, who sees

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everything, who is of one form (equal) to all the people, who is the eye of Mitra and Varuṇa, rises and throws away darkness by rolling it like a skin ? All worlds live by the grace of Sūrya, which prompts all to action. Hence he is called "Sarvakartā".

Savitṛ : In all 11 hymns are addressed to Savitṛ in the Ṛgveda. Savitṛ is the god representing inspiring aspect of the solar power which particularly exists just before sun-rise and sun-set. The form of Savitṛ is an all-encompassing golden hue. He is "Svarṇahasta", Hiraṇyahasta, Hiraṇyapāṇi, Hiraṇyajihva, Hiraṇyarūpa, Hiraṇyabāhu", his chariot too has golden pole, golden pins, not only golden pole and pins but entirely golden (Hiraṇyaprauga, Hiraṇyaśamya, Hiraṇyaye-narathena). (See Ṛv. I.35 for the depiction of Savitṛ as a golden deity). Here is a beautiful picture of the advent of Savitṛ :

"आ कृष्णेन रजसा वर्तमानः निवेशयन्नमृतं मर्त्यं च।

हिरण्ययेन सविता रथेना देवो याति भुवनानि पश्यन्।।"

(Ṛv. 1.35.2)

"Rolling hither through the dark region, God Savitṛ stations the immortal and the mortal in their respective places and comes along witnessing all the beings (worlds) on his golden chariot." His glory as the inspiring deity is evident from the following Mantra which every Hindu should be proud of repeating every morning and evening.

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तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि।

धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात्।। (Ṛv. 3.62.10)

May God Savitṛ who is the inner dweller of all and who has the great lustre worthy of worship, inspire our intellect." This is the famous Mantra called Gāyatrī due to its metre and Savitṛ by virtue of its deity.

Pūṣan : In Ṛgveda, Pūṣan is celebrated in 8 Sūktas. In two Sūktas, he is praised with Indra and Soma. Pūṣan is the nourishing deity. He represents the all-nourishing aspect of solar power and as such, he is one of the solar deities. The beauty of Pūṣan is unparallelled. He is Darśanīya. and hence called "Dasra" (Ṛv. 10.26.1). He comes in a chariot and has matted locks like Rudra. He is the lord of abundant wealth.

"रथीतमं कपर्दिनम् ईशानं राधसो महः।" (Ṛv. 6.55.2)

Golden lance and sharp trident are his weapons (Ṛv. 1.42.6; 6.53.6). His chariot is drawn by goats. Hence he is called "Ajāśva" (Ṛv. 6.55.3). His vision is all-encompassing and it is impartially equal on all - "Samadarśitva" :

यो विश्वभिविपश्यति भुवना सञ्च पश्यति।

स नः पूषाविता भुवत्।। (Ṛv. 3.62.9)

"God Pūṣan observed all the world in one glance. he witnesses all objects in their right perspective. May he be our guardian." He knows the paths of both the worlds.

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Hence he is often addressed as "Pathaspate." As he knows all the paths, he removes all the dangers on the ways and guards the people on the roads from the attack of the thieves, etc. (Ṛv. 1.42.3). Since he is the "Pathaspati", he should be prayed by those who have lost their way. He is also depicted as "Paśupālaka." He follows the wayward cattle, sheep, etc. brings back those that are lost.

Viṣṇu : Four or five hymns are devoted to Viṣṇu in the Ṛgveda. Viṣṇu is also a solar deity. When Sūrya pervades with his rays, he becomes Viṣṇu. "व्यापनाद्विष्णुः।" Viṣṇu. is described as "उरुगायः उरुक्रमः।" This is because he pervades the Heaven and Earth with his three strides. The three strides of Viṣṇu correspond to the three stages in the movement of the Sūrya at the rising time, at midday and at the setting time. The greatness and heroic deeds of Viṣṇu are well presented here :

विष्णोर्नुकं वीर्याणि प्र वोचं यः पार्थिवानि विममे रजांसि।

यो अस्कभायदुत्तरं सधस्थं विचक्रमाण स्रेधोरुगायः।।

(Ṛv. 1.154.1)

"Let me eulogise the heroic deeds of Viṣṇu who measured out the terrestrial regions and who spread out the upper resting place by striding thrice with his wide steps." This is the special feature of Viṣṇu. The three steps are full of nectar; they are not subjected to decay and feed the devotees with food - "यस्य त्री पूर्णा मधुना पदान्यक्षीयमाणास्वधया

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मदन्ति।" (Ṛv. 1.154.4). Of the three steps of Viṣṇu, two are visible to men, while the third one no mortal can see. That is the highest step of Viṣṇu, which the enlightened ever witness just as their sight has pervaded the entire Heaven.

"तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं सदा पश्यन्ति सूरयः।

दिवीव चक्षुराततम्।।" (Ṛv. 1.22.20)

In his fight against Vṛtra, Indra receives the help of Viṣṇu, who is his close friend. Both defeat all the enemies, while they are never defeated by one - "उभा जिग्यथुर्न परा जयेथे।" (Ṛv. 6.69.8).

Ādityas : Like the host of Maruts Ādityas also constitute a host (Gaṇa) of deities. This host of deities is eulogised in six Sūktas of Ṛgveda. The number of Ādityas is not specifically told. Their number may be seven or eight. Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuṇa, Dakṣa and Aṃśa are the six names of Ādityas mention in Ṛv. 2.27.1. Taittirīya Āraṇyaka (1.13.3) mentions eight names adding that they are the sons of Aditi (i.e., as Ādityas) - "अष्टौ पुत्रासो अदितेः। मित्रश्च वरुणश्च धाता च अर्यमा च अंशुश्च भगश्च इन्द्रश्च विवस्वांश्चेत्येते।" In the post-Vedic period, the number of Ādityas is 12.

Varuṇa is foremost among the Ādityas. When he alone is eulogised he is alone called Āditya. When two are glorified, Mitra and Varuṇa are addressed as Ādityas. When it is the turn of three, Mitra, Varuṇa and Aryaman are together called Ādityas. Joining Bhaga, Dakṣa and Pavitra

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(Aṃśa) with them, all the six are eulogised as Ādityas. Together all the Ādityas are full of effulgence, pure, free from all blemished and inconquerable :

आदित्यासः शुचयो धारपूता अवृजिना अनवद्या अरिष्टाः।

(Ṛv. 2.27.2)

The Ṛṣis describe them as granting fearlessness. By glorifying them through Mantras one can become totally free from fear.

Uṣas : Ṛgveda contains 20 Sūktas addressed to Uṣas. Among the female deities Uṣas is the most important. She is the presiding deity of the phenomenon of Dawn, the morning twilight. The hymns addressed to Uṣas are the best pieces of Vedic poetry with their charming and lucid ideas, describing the beauty of the Indian morning twilight adorning the east just before sun-rise and heralding the arrival of the powerful morning star. Uṣas is described as the daughter of Dyauḥ - "दिवः दुहिता" (Ṛv. 1.92.7). Although she is ancient, she is ever new : "पुनः पुनर्जायमाना पुराणी।" (Ṛv. 1.92.10). The shining goddess as she is, she yokes her horses to horses at the regular time daily and goes round the world, wakens the sleeping men and animals and prompts them to engage themselves in their respective duties. (Ṛv. 4.51.5). The Uṣas has auspicious form and is of true form and born for truth - "ऋतजातसत्याः" (Ṛv. 4.51.7). She is gloriously describes thus :

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"अधि पेशांसि वपते नृनूरिव अपोर्णुते वक्ष उस्रेव भर्जहम्।

ज्योतिर्विश्वस्मै भुवनाय कृण्वती गावो न व्रज व्युषा आवर्तमः।।"

(Ṛv. 1.92.4)

"Uṣas cuts asunder the darkness that envelops the world. Like a dancer with a beautiful form she exposes her bosom uncovered by darkness, like the cow showing its udder at the time of milking. Just as the cows enter the cow-pen on their own, so does Uṣas appears in the east and removes darkness by providing light to all the worlds." Sūrya is mentioned as the husband of Uṣas. Hence Uṣas is called "वाजिनीवती सूर्यस्य योषा" (Ṛv. 7.75.5). Since she comes earlier to Sūrya, she is also deemed as the mother of Sūrya. Since she grants wealth, health, long life and children, she is called the bouteous one - "मघोनी।"

Aśvins : In Ṛgveda more than fifty hymns eulogise Aśvins, the twin gods. They are ever youthful, ever handsome, shining with golden hue. They are ancient and yet are the youngest among the gods. They adorn themselves with the garlands of lotus seeds and come in a car along with Sūryā, the daughter of Sūrya. When they yoke their chariot with horses, Uṣas appears. They are described as the sons of Dyauḥ. They protect the devotees both in the atmosphere region and the heavenly region. Uṣas is spoken as their sister, Sūryā as their beloved - "येन पती भवाथः सूर्यायाः।" (Ṛv. 4.43.6). They are always engaged in

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doing good to all. They rescue all from the onslaught of strifes and stresses and all attacks of diseases. They are described as the divine physicians - "उतत्या दैव्या भिषजा शं नः करतो अश्विना।" (Ṛv 8.18.8). It was they who freed Cyavāna from old age and granted him youth (Ṛv. 6.17.5). A Ṛṣi called Kali was given youth by Aśvins (Ṛv. 1039.8).

The above is a brief account of the important deities of the Ṛgveda as classified under the three heads of Pṛthivīsthāna, Antarīkṣasthāna and Dyusthāna. The eulogy of all these gods together is found in some hymns (about 40) called Viśvedeva hymns. All the deities of the Ṛgvedic pantheon are the different powers of one Supreme God. This notion is firmly established in the Viśvedeva hymns. The spirit behind them is the glorification of all gods as one without any difference, neither superior nor inferior, all being equal. See them eulogised together :

"अग्निरिन्द्रो वरुणो मित्रो अर्यमा वायुः पूषा सरस्वती सजोषसः।
आदित्या विष्णुर्मरुतः स्वर्बृहत् सोमो रुद्रो अदितिः ब्रह्मणस्पतिः।।"

(Ṛv. 10.65.1)

There are many other deities in the Ṛgveda. Some of them are the personifications of some abstract ideas. Such gods are Manyu (Indra's Anger), Śraddhā, Dhiṣaṇa etc.

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1.3.10 QUESTIONS

1. Write an essay on the religion of the Ṛgveda.

2. **Give an account of the following :**

   i) Deities of the Pṛthivīsthāna

   ii) Deities of the Antarikṣasthāna

   iii) Deities of the Dyusthāna

3. **Write short notes on the following :**

i) Classification of gods, (ii) Religious hymns, (iii) Agni, (iv) Indra, (v) Varuṇa, (vi) Rudra, (vii) Uṣas, (viii) Maruts, (ix) Solar deities, (x) Viśvedevas, (xi) Aśvins

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UNIT - 4

VEDIC LITERATURE

ṚGVEDASAṂHITĀ - 3

1.4.1 Introduction

1.4.2 Objectives

1.4.3 Secular Hymns of the Ṛgveda

1.4.3.1 Dānastutis

1.4.3.2 Maṇḍukasūkta

1.4.3.3 Funeral Hymns

1.4.3.4 Akṣasūkta

1.4.3.5 Saṃvādasūktas

1.4.3.6 Vivāḥasūkta

1.4.3.7 Aitihāsikasūktas

1.4.3.8 Ābhicārakasūktas

1.4.3.9 Wise Speech and Maxims

1.4.3.10 Brahmodyas

1.4.4 Questions

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UNIT - 4

VEDIC LITERATURE

ṚGVEDASAṂHITĀ - 3

1.4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the present Unit, it proposed to deal with the second group of hymns called secular hymns. A study of these hymns will be done under different heads to facilitate the conclusions to be drawn as to what they teach and what their importance is in the history of thought. Each topic has a lot of material in the Ṛgveda and the attempt here is only to acquaint the students with main trend and main thoughts about what the secular hymns deal with.

1.4.2 OBJECTIVES

As already indicated earlier, the main aim of studying the contents of the Secular hymns is only to highlight their importance in reflecting social customs, literary pursuits, sports and passtime of the people of Ṛgvedic times and show how they have a bearing on the later developments falling into several disciplines as Sociology, Literature - Drama, Mahākāvya, etc., Subhaṣita literature, Ethics, Literary games, etc.

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1.4.3 SECULAR HYMNS OF THE ṚGVEDA

The name "Secular Hymns" has been applied to a group of 50 to 60 Sūktas of the Ṛgveda. They contain invaluable information about certain secular matters such as social customs like marriage, funeral practices, etc., literary pursuits, sports, passtime, etc., of our ancient people. There is a famous Sūkta called Sūryāsūkta (Ṛv. 10.85) which gives an account of the rites coming as part of the marriage ceremony as illustrated through the description of the marriage of Sūrya with Soma. As regards the funeral customs, there are five funeral hymns (Ṛv. 10.14-18). As per the indications available in these hymns it can be inferred that our ancient people had both the practices of cremation and burial of the dead. There is also an indication that the widow marriage was prevalent in ancient times.

In order to have an idea of the literary pursuits of the ancient society, we should go through what are called Saṃvādasūktas (Dialogue hymns). The dialogues between Pururavas and Urvaśī (Ṛv. 10.95), Yama and Yamī (Ṛv. 10.10), Viśvāmitra and Rivers (Ṛv. 3.35), Indra, Aditi and Vāmadeva (Ṛv. 4.18) are very charming. H. Oldenberg calls them as "Ākhyāna Hymns". According to him, there are the oldest specimens of narrative poetry. They were in the form of the mixture of prose and poetry. The dialogue parts which were in the metrical form have been preserved in the Ṛgveda which is entirely in metrical form. Max

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Mueller and Sylvan Livi are of the opinion that they were the pieces of religious dramas which come as a part of sacrificial ceremony. John Hertel and Schroeder are in favour of considering them as the remnants of ancient dramas. Winternitz feels that they are the ballads of which the dialogue parts have been preserved. These hymns are the sources of later Sanskrit drama and epic literature.

Yet other Sūktas have didactic form. The most charming among them is the Akṣasūkta (Ṛv. 10.34), which contains a soliloquy of a penitent gambler. Who lost everything of his due to his fascination for gambling. "अक्षैर्मा दीव्यः कृषिमित्कृषस्व" is the advice imparted through it. Ṛv. 9.112 is a Sūkta which gives an idea as to how and in how many way men aspire for gain. Ṛv. 10.71 called "Jñānasūkta" praises the greatness of scholarship and Ṛv. 10.117 depicts the fruits of good deeds. There are the precursors of the later Subhāṣita literature in Sanskrit. There are Danastutis (in praise of generosity) which give an account of the liberal people, poets, etc., with their family tradition. They give an idea of regional features of the Aryan people. Two Sūktas contain "riddles" (Brahmodyas). One of them, Ṛv. 8.29 gives enigmas about gods without naming them. The other one, which is the famous Aṣyāvāmīyasūkta (Ṛv. 1.164), gives riddles about the year, months, weaks, days, etc.

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A brief account of these Sūktas will be given here under the following heads :

1.4.3.1 Dānastutis 1.4.3.2 Maṇḍūkasūkta

1.4.3.3 Funeral Hymns 1.4.3.4 Akṣasūkta

1.4.3.5 Saṃvādasūktas 1.4.3.6 Vivāhasūkta

1.4.3.7 Aitihāsakasūktas 1.4.3.8 Ābhicārakasūktas

1.4.3.9 Wise Speech and Maxims

1.4.3.10 Brahmodyas

1.4.3.1 DĀNASTUTIS

Some Sūktas which commemorate the liberality of the princes towards the priests, are called "Dānastutis", the penegyrics of gifts. They are mainly concerned with the kind and the amount of the gifts and also furnish some historical date about the families and geneologies of the donors as well as those of the priests (Ṛṣis) and mention the names and homes of Vedic tribes. The following is an illustration of what is said above :

"द्वे नप्तुर्देववतः शते गोर्धा रथा वधूयन्ता सुदासः।

अर्हन्नग्ने पैजवनस्य दानं होतेव सद्म पर्येमिरेभन्।।"

(Ṛv. 7.18.22)

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"O God Agni, Sudāsa, grandson of king Devavān and son of Pijavana, gives two hundred cows and two chariots along with a "Vadhū" as the gift. In order to reeeive it I go to the sacrificial chamber worthily like a Hotṛ." Strictly speaking there is only one hymn, i.e., Ṛv. 1.126 that is wholly a Dānastuti. In all other cases, it is only 3 to 5 verses at the end of a hymn that contain the Dānastuti. The donor gets the benefits here and hereafter :

"उच्चा दिवि दक्षिणावन्तो अस्थुर्ये अश्वदा सहते सूर्येण।

हिरण्यदा अमृतत्वं भजन्ते वासोदाः सोमप्रतिरन्त आयुः।।"

(Ṛv. 10.107.2)

Ṛv. 10.117 describes the greatness of "Dāna" in many ways. One of the matras is given here for example :

"मोघमन्नं विन्दते अप्रचेताः सत्यं ब्रवीमि वध इत्स तस्य।

नार्यमणं पुष्यति नो सखायं केवलाघो भवति केवलादी।।"

(Ṛv. 10.117.6)

"The unthinking niggard gets food in vain, I tell the truth, that is his death; he nourishes not the God Aryaman nor does he nourish his own friend; he who eats alone eats sin, (is a sinner)."

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1.4.3.2 MAṆḌŪKASŪKTA

The Sūkta no. 103 in the 7th Maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda is called Maṇḍūkasūkta. It is said in the Ṛgvidhāna that it should be recited along with Vārṣika-Sūktas (annual hymns). Yāska (Nirukta, 9.6) says that Vasiṣṭha (the Ṛṣi of the 7th Maṇḍala) recited this Sūkta for procuring rain and that when the frogs produced their croakling sound in approval, Vasiṣṭha praised them to show his gratefulness. The Sūkta begins with a reference to the frogs croakling with joy on the arrival rain :

"संवत्सरं शशयाना ब्राह्मणा व्रतचारिणः।

वाचं पर्जन्यजिन्वितां प्र मण्डूका अवदिषुः।।" (Ṛv. 7.103.1)

"Having gone into slumber for one year like the Brāhmaṇas observing a vow, the frogs produce their 'thanksgiving' sound which was prompted by the shower of rain." It is further described how the frogs greet each other with joy, repeat each other's voice like the Vedic students repeating what their teacher has recited and pray like the Brāhmaṇas in the Atirātra throughout the night.

The Sūkta depicts a phenomenon of a rainy season. It is a Sūkta with a magical purpose. It is charm for rain. Some western scholars think that it is a parady on Brāhmaṇas, which cannot be the case, as observed by Max Mueller,

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because the Brāhmaṇa like Vasiṣṭha might not have indulged in such a parody of his clan. Vasiṣṭha, in the end, praises them as deities and seeks their grace.

1.4.3.3 FUNERAL HYMNS

In the tenth Maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda, there are five Sūktas (i.e., 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th) which deal with death and the rites connected with what is called "और्ध्वदैहिक" ceremony. The first of these (the 14th) is addressed to Yama. the next (the 15th) to the Pitṛs (fathers), the third (the 16th) to Agni and the fourth (the 17th) to Pūṣan and Sarasvatī. Obviously these are the deities who are connected with future life after death. Only one hymn, i.e., the 18th, is strictly the funeral hymn. "Grave and elevated in tone, it is distinguished by great beauty of language" (Macdonell, Sanskrit Literature, p. 105). It is important because it gives information about the funeral practices of those ancient days. Both cremation (dahana) and burying (khanana) were in vogue in those days. Here is a reference to the practice of "khanana" :

"उपसर्प मातरं भूमिमेताम् उरुव्यचसं पृथिवी सुशेवाम्।
ऊर्णमृदा युवतिर्दक्षिणावती एषा त्वा पातु निर्ऋतेरुपस्थात्।।"

(Ṛv. 10.18.10)

"Enter into Mother Earth, who is of expansive space,

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who is pervasive, who is the giver of joy, who is soft like wool and who youthful full of kindness. Let her protect you from "Nirṛti (hell)". The practice of "dahana" is also highlighted here :

"अवसृज पुनरग्ने पितृभ्यो यस्त आहुतिश्चरति स्वधाभिः।

आयुर्वसान उपवेतु शेषः संगच्छतां तन्वा जातवेदः।।"

(Ṛv. 10.16.5)

"O Agni, take the dead to his manes. He is offered into fire with Mantras and is given libation to the accompaniment of 'Svadhā'. Let him get re-incarnated with the allotment of life duration. O Jātavedas let him have body by your grace." The following Mantra is taken to have a hint about widow marriage in those times :

"उदीर्ष्व नार्यभि जीवलोकं गतासुमेतमुप शेष एहि।

हस्तग्राभस्य दिधिषोस्तवेदं पत्युर्जनित्वमभि संबभूथ।।"

(Ṛv. 10.18.8)

"Rise up, o woman, come to this world of life, you are lying by the side of one whose life has left him, come, you have already enjoyed the state of being a wife of your husband, the suitor who took you by the hand." This does not indicate anything about widow-marriage at all. Let the advocates of this theory see the perfect form ".

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1.4.3.4 AKṢASŪKTA

Among the secular hymns of the Ṛgveda, the "Akṣasūkta" (Ṛv. 10.34), which is called "Gambler's hymn" is the most charming one. It is a lamentation of a penitent gambler who has lost everything in his fascination for gambling. It strikes a pathetic note. The gambler remembers how gladdening were the dice to him :

"प्रावेपा मा बृहतो मादयन्ति प्रवातेजाः इरिणे वर्वृतानाः।

सोमस्येव मौजवतस्य भक्षो विभीदको जागृविर्मह्यमच्छान्।।"

(Ṛv. 10.34.1)

"The Vibhīdakas (dice, the nuts of Vibhīdaka tree), which are dangling, which are of the great tree, which are born in a windy place, which roll on the dice-board and which are active, gladden me like the drink of the best kind of Soma called Maujavat (from the Mujavant mountain)." He lost his domestic happiness because of temptation for gambling :

"न मा मिमेथ न जिहीळ एषा शिवा सखिभ्य उत मह्यमासीत्।

अक्षस्याहमेकपरस्य हेतोरनुव्रतामप जायामरोधम्।"

(Ṛv. 10.34.2)

"My wife was never angry with me; she never hated me; she was kind to myself and my friend. But for the sake of these dice which are always wrong by one, drove away a

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devoted wife" The result is that she hated him; his mother-in-law desisted him; his relatives did not accept him; his parents, brothers, all drove him away. This was the plight he was in, all due to his fascination for gambling. So weak was his mind that he could not resist the temptation of going to the gambling place when he heard the rattling noise of the dice, like a wanton lady to the "Saṅketasthāna"-

"न्युप्ताश्च बभ्रवो वाचमक्रत एमीदेषां निष्कृतं जारिणीव।"

(Ṛv. 10.34.5)

(When they are thrown on the dice-board, they talk; I go to their place like a Wanton lady to the place of assignation).

Finally the Sūkta ends in a didactic note, which happens to be its purpose :

"अक्षैर्मा दीव्यः कृषिमित्कृषस्व वित्ते रमस्व बहु मन्यमानः।

तत्र गावः कितव तत्र जाया तन्मे विचष्टे सवितायमर्यः।।"

(Ṛv. 10.34.13)

"Do not play with dice; till the land; be happy with what money you have, thinking that to be highly worthy, there, O gambler, are your cattle, and there your wife. The God Savitṛ has advised me." Rightly, indeed Macdonell has observed : "Considering that it is the oldest composition of

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the kind in existence, we cannot but regard this poem as a most remarkable literary product." (Sanskrit Literature, p. 108).

1.4.3.5 SAṂVĀDASŪKTAS

There are about 20 hymns in the Ṛgveda which are in the form of dialogues. Even a brief account of these will take several pages. Some important ones are here briefly introduced, while others will be just mentioned. The first of those that are important is probably the dialogue between Viśvāmitra and the rivers (Vipāś and Śutudrī) - "संवादो नदीभिर्विश्वामित्रस्य" (Ṛv. 3.33). As per Nirukta, 224 and Bṛhaddevatā, 4.106, the background story is that Viśvāmitra came to the confluence of the rivers Vipāś and Śutudrī with Sudās for a sacrifice. Then this dialogue between him and the rivers took place. Viśvāmitra appeals to the rivers to make way for him to cross, which the rivers resist on the ground that they cannot stop as they are bound by the ordinances of Indra. But when they are appealed further addressing them as "Sisters", etc., their mind is softened enough to accede to the request of Viśvāmitra. Then they bent low like a mother allowing the child to drink milk and allowed Viśvāmitra and the Bharatas to cross. A sample of poetry can be seen in this poetically charming dialogue :

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"आ ते कारो शृणवामा वचांसि ययाथ दूरादनसा रथेन।

नि ते नंसै पीप्यानेव यो षा मर्यायैवकन्या शश्वचै ते।।"

(Ṛv. 3.33.10)

"O singer, we listen to your request; you have come from a far with carts and chariots; 'I bend low like a mother feeding the child', 'I bend low like a damsel for her husband's embrace'."

There is a hymn which contains a dialogue between Indra, Aditi and Vāmadeva dealing with the birth of Indra and his arguments with Vāmadeva. (It is Ṛv. 4.18). Again there is in the first Maṇḍala, a dialogue between Agastya and Lopāmudrā (Ṛv. 1.179). Its theme is pertaining to Lopāmudrā's desire to get sexual union with her husband, which was denied to her all those years. Agastya agreed to it. This dialogue was overheard by a desciple of Agastya, who on that count decided to undergo "Prāyaścitta". Then there is another Saṃvāda between Vasiṣṭha, Vāsiṣṭhara and Indra (Ṛv. 7.33)

The dialogue between Yama and Yamī (Ṛv. 10.10) comes in the tenth Maṇḍala. Yama and Yamī were the twin children of Vaivasvata. When they came to a distant island with dim light, Yamī fell in love with her brother Yama and started enticing him to sleep with her. Yama who was brave and wise resisted her temptation. He advises her to desist from her attempt. But Yamī who had been blind with

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passion reminded Yama of her company with him right from they stay in the mother's womb. Yama uses this argument to remind her of their relation of brother and sister which does not admit of the type of relation that she wanted with him. Each maintain their stand. See the firmness of Yama's mind his determination to firm in what he thought was the Dharma.

"रात्रीभिरस्मा अहभिर्दशस्येत् सूर्यस्य चक्षुर्मुहुरुन्मिमीयात्।

दिवा पृथिव्या मिथुना सबन्धू यमी यमस्य निभृयादजामि।।"

(Ṛv. 10.10.9)

"Let the sacrificers offer me oblation in the sacrifices done during days and nights. Let the eye of Sūrya be always open. Let Dyāvāpṛthivī be gracious towards me. Let Yamī leave me who am her brother and marry another." The implication of the dialogue is that there was never such a relation of incest in the ancient times.

Among the dialogue hymns the most notable one is the dialogue between Pururavas and Urvaśī (Ṛv. 10.95). Pururavas was a human king and Urvaśī was a nymph of heaven. As per the stories in Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (11.5.1), etc., Pururavas and Urvaśī lived together for some years and disappeared all of a sudden. As per another version of the story which has the support of the Ṛgvedic dialogue, she was pregnant when she disappeared. Pururavas went in search of her. When Urvaśī was sporting in a lake with other

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nymphs, Pururavas met her. He reminded her of their relation and asked her to stop for a while to have a talk with him. Urvaśī contended that she had nothing to with that talk and that she was beyond his reach - "दुरापना वात इवाहमस्मि।" (I am beyond grasp like the wind - Ṛv. 10.95.2). Pururavas reveals his pangs of separation in pathetic terms (Ṛv. 10.95.3). Urvaśī tried to eulogise the good deeds of Pururavas and prompts her to continue his activities as a king. The child of Pururavas and Urvaśī is referred to here. Urvaśī asks Pururavas to take the child and nourish him so that he might forget the pangs of separation. Looking to his condition she finally assured him by saying that she would join him in heaven when he would come there by performing sacrifices. This story has grown through the ages until it came to Kālidāsa who has made it immortal by his Vikramorvaśīya.

The dialogue between Saramā and Paṇis is another chrming dialogue (Ṛv. 10.108). As per Sāyaṇa's account, the cows of Bṛhaspati the priest of Indra, were stolen by the demons called Paṇis, the soldiers of Vala, a demon, and were hidden in a cave. Indra sent the divine dog called Saramā. Crossing a gigantic river, Saramā reached the city of Vala and discovered the cows imprisoned there. Knowing about this the Paṇis tried to befriend her by holding a conversation. They asked as to how she came there by crossing the river Rasā. The answer of Saramā is to the point :

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"इन्द्रस्य दूतीरिषिता चरामि मह इच्छन्ती पणयो निधीन् वः।

अतिष्कदो भियसा तन्न आवत्तथा रसाया अतरं पयांसि।।"

(Ṛv. 10.108.2)

"The messenger of Indra as I am, I came here on his direction. I came here for your great wealth of cows. The waters of the river protected me by the fear of transgression. Thus I crossed the waters of Rasā." Paṇis tried to play tricks on Saramā by asking her to be their sister and tempting her to the mistress of all their cows. But Saramā warned them saying that they would fall on being killed by Indra (Ṛv. 10.108.4). Paṇis too, got angry and challenged as to how she could take the cows from them. She warned them about the dire consequences and asked them to run away. These Paṇis are supposed to be merchants who had transactions with people of other countries and Rasā is supposed to be forming the border of India at that time.

There is an interesting dialogue between gods and Agni which spreads over 3 Sūktas, i.e., Ṛv. 10.51, 52, 53. According to Sāyaṇa, Saucīka, a form of Agni and a brother of two Agnis called Vaṣaṭkāra and Havirvahana. He was tired of carrying oblations of gods like his brothers and hid himself in water. Gods came in search of him and discovered him with the help of fishes. Then the dialogue ensued. The gods say that one god has found all his forms and all his limbs - "विश्वा अपश्यद् बहुधा ते अग्ने जातवेदस्तन्वो देव

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एक:" (Ṛv. 10.51.1). Agni retorted asking as to who was that god who found all his forms - "को मा ददर्श कतम: स देव:?" (Ṛv. 10.51.2) and challenged Mitrā-Varuṇa to show all those limbs of his which were the means of Devayāna and which were shining. Gods said that he was discovered in his ten hiding places, viz., Pṛthivī, Antarikṣa and Dyulokā, Agni, Vāyu and Āditya; Ap, Oṣadhi, Vanaspati and Prāṇiśarīra (Ṛv. 10.51.3). Gods requested him to continue his function of "Havirvāhana". Then Agni demanded a major share in the oblation - "प्रयाजान्मे अनुयाजांश्च केवलान् ऊर्जस्वन्तं हविषो दत्तभागम्।" (Ṛv. 10.51.8). Gods accede to his demand (Ṛv. 10.51.9). The dialogue continues in Sūktas 52 and 53 also. The three Sūktas look like three acts of a drama.

The views of the different scholars about these dialogue hymns and the point that they form the earliest inspiration of Sanskrit drama on the one hand and the epic poetry on the other hand, are already referred to in the general introduction to the secular hymns. (See 1.4.3).

1.4.3.6 VIVĀHASŪKTA

The 85th Sūkta of the 10th Maṇḍala is the Vivāhasūkta, which is well known as Sūryāsūkta. It has several Mantras employed in the context of different items of the marriage ceremony, the procedure of which is set here through the celebration of the marriage of Sūryā, the

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daughter of Sūrya, with Soma. The Sūkta begins with a praise of Soma as residing in "Dyuloka", as of unparallelled greatness, and as the giver of strength for all deities :

"सोमेनादित्या बलिनः सोमेन पृथिवी मही।

अथो नक्षत्राणामेषामुपस्थे सोम आहितः।।"

(Ṛv. 10.85.2)

Sūryā came of age and aspired for a husband. Soma too wanted to have a wife. Aśvin also stood as bridegrooms. Then Savitṛ decided to give his daughter (Sūryā) in marriage to Soma (Ṛv. 10.85.9). The formalities of the bridegroom's seeking the approval of the parents of the bride being over, the bride was mentally close to her lord :

"मनो अस्या अन आसीत् द्यौरासीदुतच्छदिः।

शुक्रावनड्वाहावास्तां यदयात्सूर्या गृहम्।।"

(Ṛv. 10.85.10)

"When Sūryā desired to go to her husband's house, her mind itself became the chariot, Dyuloka became the cover and the bright Sūrya and Candra became the bullocks. Thus Sūryā went (mentally) to her husband's place." Soma asked her to get into the chariot (Ṛv. 10.85.20). At the time of "Gṛhapraveśa" of the bride, Soma said - "इह प्रियं प्रजया समृद्ध्यतामस्मिन् गृहे गार्हपत्याय जागृहि।" (Ṛv. 10.85.27) - "O bride, here you make your beloved prosper with children. Be the

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mistress in this house." He called the elders of his place and addressed them pointing to his bride -

"सुमङ्गलीरियं वधूरिमां समेत पश्यत।

सौभाग्यमस्यै दत्त्वायाथास्तं वि परेतन।।"

(Ṛv. 10.85.33)

"This my bride is a "Sumaṅgalī" Come together and see her. confer all blessings on her and return to your homes." Then the "Pāṇigrahaṇa" ceremony took place; the bridegroom held her hand saying :

"गृभ्णामि ते सौभगत्वाय हस्तं मया पत्या जहदष्टिर्यथासः।

भगा अर्यमा सविता पुरन्धिः मह्यं त्वादुर्गार्हपत्याय देवाः।।"

(Ṛv. 10.85.36)

"I hold your hand for my prosperity. Live with me, your husband, until you grow old. Bhaga, Aryamā, Savitṛ, Purandhi, these gods have given you to me so that I would become the lord of the house." The blessings to the bride are couched beautifully in the following :

"अघोरचक्षुरपतिघ्न्येधि शिवा पशुभ्यः सुमनाः सुवर्चाः।

वीरसूर्देवकामा स्योना शं नो भव द्विपदे शं चतुष्पदे।।"

(Ṛv. 10.85.44)

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"O bride. prosper without any fearful look; do not do any harm to the husband. Be kind towards the animals. Be of good mind and good look. May you become a mother of heroes. With devotion towards gods, be kind and salutory to the bipeds and quadrupeds." We find here all the Mantras even now used in Hindu marriages. Yāska and others discuss about the secret significance of the marriage between Sūryā and Soma. Nirukta, 11.4 and 11.5 say this marriage symbolises the transfer of Sūrya's light to Candra (Soma). This light is symbolically presented Sūryā.

1.4.3.7 AITIHĀSIKASŪKTAS

As per the views of modern scholars, the Ṛgveda has certain points of historical importance. They are of the opinion that ancient history can be formulated with the help of those points. Many Mantras in the Ṛgveda refer to the geneology of kings, their grandeur and valour Dānastutis, in particular, give the names and families of the donor kings and the priests. The victories of some kings are also highlighted in them. From this point of view the Sūktas 18th, 19th and 33rd in the 7th Maṇḍala (Vāsiṣṭhamaṇḍala) are important. The following Mantra gives an information that when the kings like Yadu, Turvasu, Bhṛgu, Druhya tried to achieve success through sacrifices, it was Indra who protected Sadāsa among them :

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"पुरोळा इत्तुर्वशो यक्षुरासीद्राये मत्स्यासो निशिता अपीव।

श्रुष्टिं चक्रुर्भृगवो द्रुह्यवश्च सखा सखायमतरद्विषूचोः।।"

(Ṛv. 7.18.6)

There is also reference to Pakthāsas, Bhalasas, Viṣāṇis, Śivāsas, etc. (Ṛv. 7.18.7). Sudāsa is described to have killed 21 Vaikarṇas for achieving victory - "एकं च यो विंशतिं च वैकर्णयोर्जनान् राजान्यस्तः।" (Ṛv. 7.18.11). By Indra's power, 66066 Anus, Druhyus were killed on the battle ground - "निगव्यवोऽनवो द्रुह्यवश्च षष्टिः शता सुषुपुः षट्सहस्रा।" (Ṛv. 7.18.14). One Bheda was an enemy of Sudāsa (Ṛv. 7.18.18). When Indra killed Bheda, the Yamunas, Tṛtsus, Ajāsas, Śigravas and Yakṣavas together offered the heads of horses to Indra to please him :

"आवदिन्द्रं यमुना तृत्सवश्च पात्रभेदं सर्वरातामुषायत्।

अजासश्च शिग्रवो यक्षवश्च बलि शीर्षाणि पभ्रुरश्वयानिं।।"

(Ṛv. 7.18.19)

This shows that Sudāsa, the son of Pijavana, waged war against Anus, Druhyas, Purus, Masyas and Turvasus and other tribes and achieved victory on the bank of the river Parusṇī. Since the inhabitants of Yamuna banks are said to have surrendered to Indra, Sudāsa had conquered the country upto the bank of Yamunā.

In Ṛv. 7.19.2, 4 and 5 give the information that Indra

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protected Kutsa in his war against Dāsa, Śuṣṇa and Kuvaya, that he killed Dasya, Cumuri and Dhuni for the sake of a royal sage called Dabhita and that he destroyed 99 towns of Śaṃbara and killed Vṛtra, Nanaucī, etc.

The 33rd Sūkta in the 7th Maṇḍala speaks clearly of the Dāśarajña war (war of Ten kings). This Sūkta is in the form of a dialogue between Vasiṣṭha and Vāsiṣṭhara. It is described that Sudāsa became victorious with the help of Vasiṣṭha. Due to Vasiṣṭha's prayer only Indra protected Sudāsa in the war :

"एवेन्नु कं दशराज्ञे सुदासं प्रावदिन्द्रो ब्रह्मणा वो वसिष्टाः।"

(Ṛv. 7.33.3)

The 83rd Sūkta of this Maṇḍala (7th) only clearly says about the Dāśarājña war. It is described that Indra protected Sudāsa who was with Tṛtsus in the battle, when ten kings attacked him :

"यत्र राजभिर्दशभिर्मिबाधितं प्र सुदासमावतं तृसुभिः सह।"

(Ṛv. 7.83.6)

Ṛv. 7.83.7 also speaks of Sudāsa's victory over the ten kings.

Such Sūktas of Ṛgveda have been of historical importance and are helpful in formulating a history of those ancient times. There are references to the solar and lunar

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ra· in the Ṛgveda. Pururavas, Nahuṣa and Yayāti belonged to the lunar race. It is said that Yayāti gave five names to his five sons :

"यदिन्द्राग्नी यदुषु तुर्वशेषु यद् द्रुह्यष्वनुषु पुरुषु स्थः।"

(Ṛv. 1.108.8)

Pūrus established their kingdom on the banks of the river Sarasvatī. The Bharatas referred to in the Ṛgveda (3.33) belonged to the solar race. They were the grand-children of Manu. They were also ruling on the banks of the river Sarasvatī. The scions of this race crossed the rivers Vipāś and Śutudrī (Ṛv. 3.33.11) under the direction of Viśvāmitra and spread their kingdom upto Sarayū. There is a reference to Viśvāmitra thus - "विश्वामित्रस्य रक्षति ब्रह्मेदं भारतं जनम्।" (Ṛv. 3.53.12) - "The Brāhma power of Viśvāmitra protects the Bhārata race." The 10th Maṇḍala speaks of the Bhārata heroes Devāpi and Śantanu. In Ṛv. 10.95.14, the names Duśśīma, Pṛthuvāna, Vena, powerful Rama (Prarāma) are mentioned. Some are of the view that this Rāma is Rāma of Ayodhya. Others say that it might refer to some Ṛṣi of that name.

1.4.3.8 ĀBHICĀRAKASŪKTAS

There are some hymns (about 10 - 12) in the Ṛgveda which are like the Ābhicārakasūktas of the Atharvaveda.

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The 42nd and the 43rd Sūktas in the second Maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda have Indra in the form of Kapiñjala (bird) as their deity. The Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra (3.10.9) prescribes that these Sūktas should be recited on hearing the inauspicious cries of the birds. It was believed that the cries of some birds were inauspicious. The 191st Sūkta of the first Maṇḍala is meant for the destruction of the poisonous worms and insects. In order to revive a man from his death-bed, there are Mantras in the 58th and 60th Sūktas of the 10th Maṇḍala. The life of one Subandhu is called back in the following Mantra.

"अयं मातायं पितायं जीवातुरा गमत्।

इदं तव प्रसर्पणं सुबन्धवेहि निरीहि।।"

.(Ṛv. 10.60.7)

"He is the mother, he is the father. He who came to revive you is Agni. O Subandu, see, enter this body awaiting you." Again the 183rd Sūkta of the 10th Maṇḍala is employed for securing progeny. The 162nd Sūkta of the same Maṇḍala is meant for avoiding abhortion and protecting the faetus. The first Mantra is this :

"ब्रह्मणाग्निः संविदानो रक्षोहा बाधतामितः।

अमीवा यस्ते गर्भं गुर्णा मा योनिमाशये।।"

(Ṛv. 10.16.1)

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"Let Agni the destroyer of demons be one with the Mantra and drive out the demons who have entered into the faetus in the form of the disease called "Arśas". There are Mantras meant for the destruction of the enemy. The 166th Sūkta of the 10th Maṇḍala is one such Sūkta. The following Mantra from it can be seen :

"अहमस्मि सपत्नहेन्द्र इवारिष्टो अक्षतः।

अदः सपत्ना मे पदोरिमे सर्वे अभिष्ठिताः।।"

(Ṛv. 10.166.2)

"Let me become the destroyer of enemies. Let me be without being killed and without being injured. Let all my enemies remain trampled under my feet." The intention of causing harm to the co-wife (Sapatnī) is found in the 145th Sūkta of the 10th Maṇḍala. A herb sanctified by a Mantra was tied to a wife and she was asked to embrace her husband for making him touch the herb without knowing it. Then her husband's mind would come towards her like a cow hurrying towards the calf and like water flowing towards the lower ground -

"मामनु प्रते मनो वत्सं गौरिव धाततु पथा वारीवधावतु।"

(Ṛv. 10.145.6)

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The first Mantra of this Sūkta is this :

"इमां खनाम्योषधिं वीरुधं बलवत्तमाम्।

यथा सपत्नीं बाधते यया संविन्दते पतिम्।।"

(Ṛv. 10.145.1)

"I dig out this herb which is very powerful. This will cause suffering to the co-wife and I will get my husband back." There are Mantras meant for curing tuberculosis, heart diseases, etc. (Ṛv. 10.161.1)

1.4.3.9 WISE SPEECH AND MAXIMS

The 112th Sūkta in the 9th Maṇḍala consisting of only 4 Mantras ending in "इन्द्रायेन्दो परिस्रव", describes with mild humour how men follow after gain in various ways :

i) "नानानं वा उ नो धियो वि व्रतानि जनानाम्।

कर्मारो अश्मभिर्हिरण्यवन्तमिच्छन्ति।।" (इन्द्रायेन्दो परिस्रव)

ii) "जरतीभिरोषधीभिः पर्णेभिः शकुनानाम्।

कर्मारो अश्मभिर्हिरण्यवन्तमिच्छन्ति।।" (इन्द्रायेन्दो परिस्रव)

iii) "कारुरहं ततो भिषगुपल प्रक्षिणी नना।

नानाधियो वसूयवोऽनु गा इव तस्थिम।।"

(इन्द्रायेन्दो परिस्रव)

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iv) "अश्वो वोळ्हा सुखं रथं हसनामुपमन्त्रिणः।

शेपो रोमण्वन्तौ भेदौ वारिन्मण्डूक इच्छति।।"

(इन्द्रायेन्दो परिस्रव) (Ṛv. 9.112.4)

"Various are our acts and various are the occupations of people. The carpenter wants timber, the physician disease, the Brāhmaṇa one who extracts Soma (1). The (physician) with dried up herbs (plants), the (hunter) with the feathers of birds and the smith with shining stones wants to capture the mind of one who has gold (rich man) (2). I am a singer (poet), my father is a physician and my mother throws coin on the grinding stone. Having various occupations we remain like cattle (in the stalls) (3). The horse wants a cart which is easy to drag, those who invite guests want merriments, the frog desires water." (4)

Another hymn (Ṛv. 10.117) is collection of Maxims (moral sayings) inculcating the values of well-doing and charity. The following one is well-told :

"पृणीयादित नाथमानाय तव्यान् द्राघीयांसमनुपश्येत पन्थाम्।

ओ हि वर्तन्ते रथ्येव चक्रा अन्यमन्यमुपतिष्ठन्त रायः।।"

(Ṛv. 10.117.5)

"He who has the power should give to the needy, considering well the course of life hereafter, fortune, like

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the two revolving chariot wheels comes near one man now and then to another." The generosity is an excellent virtue :

"कृषन् इत्फालः अशितं कृणोति यन् अध्वानं अपर्वृक्ते चरित्रैः।

न दन् ब्रह्मावदतः वनीयान् पृणन्नापि अपृणन्तमभिष्यात्।।"

(Ṛv. 10.117.7)

"Telling the land one should see that the lord of the house gets nourishment. He who walks the path earns the wealth. He who speaks the Śāstras is dearer than the silent. The donor becomes a near relative but not a niggard."

The 71st Sūkta of the 10th Maṇḍala is in praise of wise speech. This is called Jñānasūkta. Two Mantras given below will give an idea of the spirit of this hymn :

i) "सक्तुमिव तितउना पुनन्तो यत्र धीरा मनसा वाचमक्रत।

अत्रा सखायः सख्यानि जानते भद्रैषां लक्ष्मीर्निहिताधि वाचि।।"

ii) "उत त्वः पश्यन्न ददर्श वाचमुतत्वः श्रृण्वन्न श्रृणोत्येनाम्।

उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं वि सस्रे जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासाः।।"

(Ṛv. 10.71.2, 4)

"When the wise create speech through wisdom winnowing (it) as men (winnow) the barley with a sieve; the friends know friendship. There is auspiciousness in their

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speech (2). Some one seeing speech do not see her some one hearing her do not hear her; to some one she exposes her body like a loving, well-attired wife to her husband. (3)

1.4.3.10 BRAHMODYAS (RIDDLES)

In Ṛgveda there are some hymns which in the form of "Samasyās" - riddles or enigmas. They are called Brahmodyas. The Mantras of the 29th Sūkta of the 8th Maṇḍala are of this type. On the basis of a special word in the Mantra, it is possible to identify as to which deity is glorified in it. For instance in the first Mantra of this Sūkta has the word "babru" - "बभ्रुरेको विषुण: ।" On the basis of this it can be identified that the deity described in the first Mantra is Ṣoma. Similarly in the Mantras 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, the deities are to be identified as Agni, Indra, Rudra, Pūṣan, Viṣṇu, Aśvins and Mitra-Varuṇas respectively. For example in the 5th Mantra, it is said "तिग्ममेको बिभर्ति वज्र आयुधं शुचिरुग्रो जलाषभेषज: ।" (Ṛv. 8.29.5). Here by the special word "जलाषभेषज:" (of cooling medicine), it is identified that Rudra is the deity described in that Mantra. Again in the Mantra 8, it is said - "विभिर्द्वाचरत एकया सह प्रप्रवासेव सहत: ।". The special reference to "एकया सह" (with one lady, Sūryā), aids the identification of the deities as Aśvins.

The 164th Sūkta of the first Maṇḍala is another Sūkta (Asyāvāmīya-Sūkta) which contains Brahmodyas. All the

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Mantras in this hymn are symbolical and mystical. The subject of one-fourth of them is the sun. Six or Seven Mantras deal with clouds, lightning and the production of rain, three or four have Agni and his various forms as their subject-matter. About three or four of them deal with the year and its divisions.

Two of them deal with the origin of the world and the one Supreme God. "एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति" which is often quoted is from this Sūkta (Mantra 46). So are the Mantras "द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया ---- अनश्नन्नन्यो अभिचाकशीति।।" (20th Mantra) and "चत्वारि वाक् परिमिता पदानि ---- तुरीयं वाचो मनुष्या वदन्ति।।" (45th Mantra). The following Mantra contains an enigma about the year with twelve months and 360 days :

"द्वादशारं न हि तज्जराय वर्वर्ति चक्रं परि द्यामृतस्य।

आ पुत्रा अग्ने मिथुनासो अत्र सप्रशतानि विंशतिश्च तस्थुः।।"

(Rv. 1.164.11)

"Provided with 12 undergoing spokes, the wheel of order rolls around the heavens; within that wheel O Agni, stand, joined in couples, the 700 sons and twenty together. Mithunāsah = pairs in the form of days and nights of the ordinary year = 720 children = 360 days + 360 nights.

These Brahmodyas or "theological problem" were exchanged in a session by the scholars during the sacrifices conducted by kings and rich men.

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1.4.4 QUESTIONS

1. Write an essay each on :

i) Didactic Sūktas in the Ṛgveda.

ii) Saṃvādasūktas in the Ṛgveda.

iii) Aitihāsikasūktas in the Ṛgveda.

iv) Funeral hymns in the Ṛgveda.

2. Write short notes on

i) Dānastutis,

ii) Maṇḍūkasūkta,

iii) Vivāhasūkta,

iv) Wise speech and Maxims

v) Ābhicārakasūktas,

vi) Brahmodyas

3. Give a brief account of the secular hymns of the Ṛgveda and their importance.

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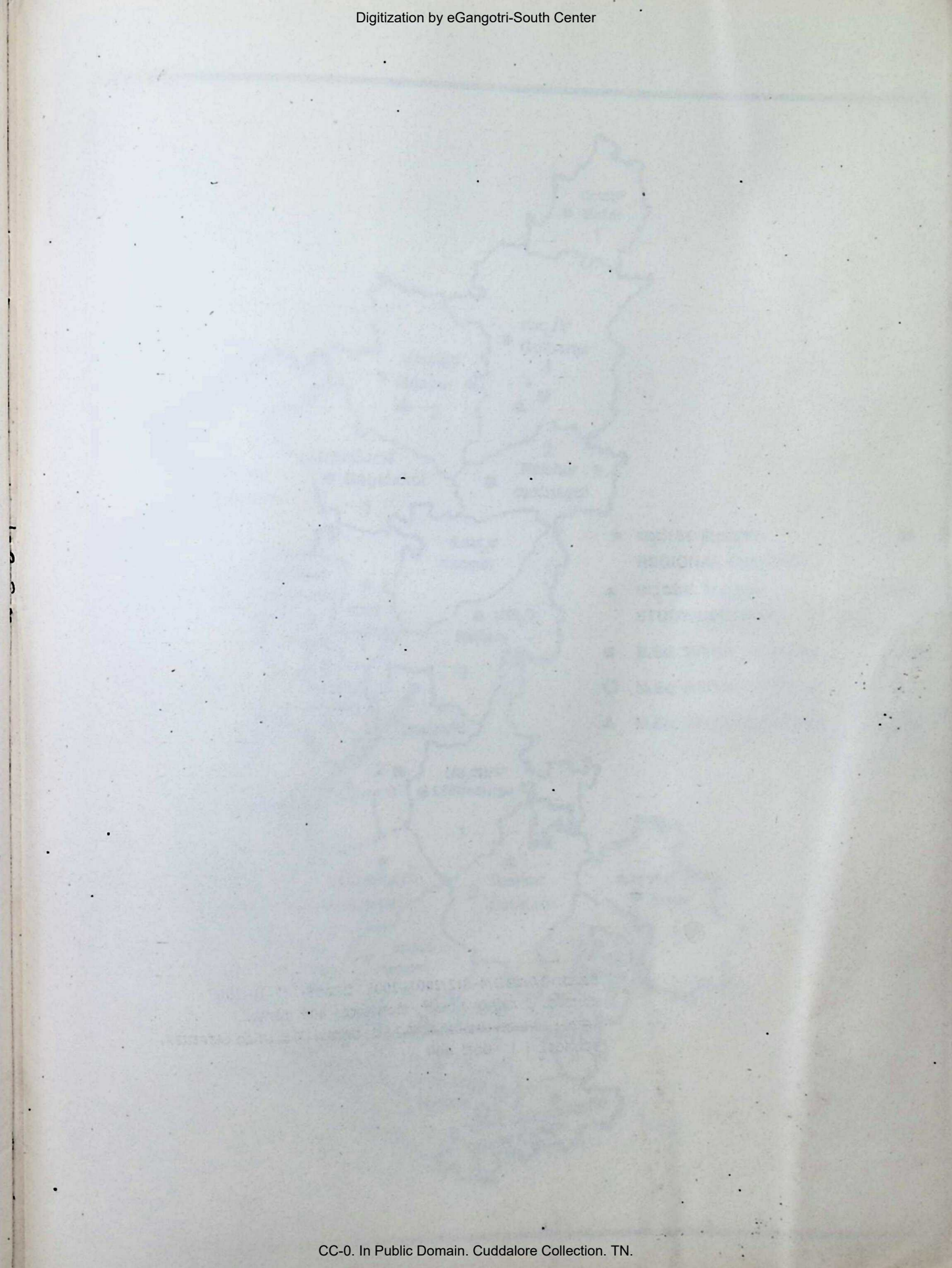

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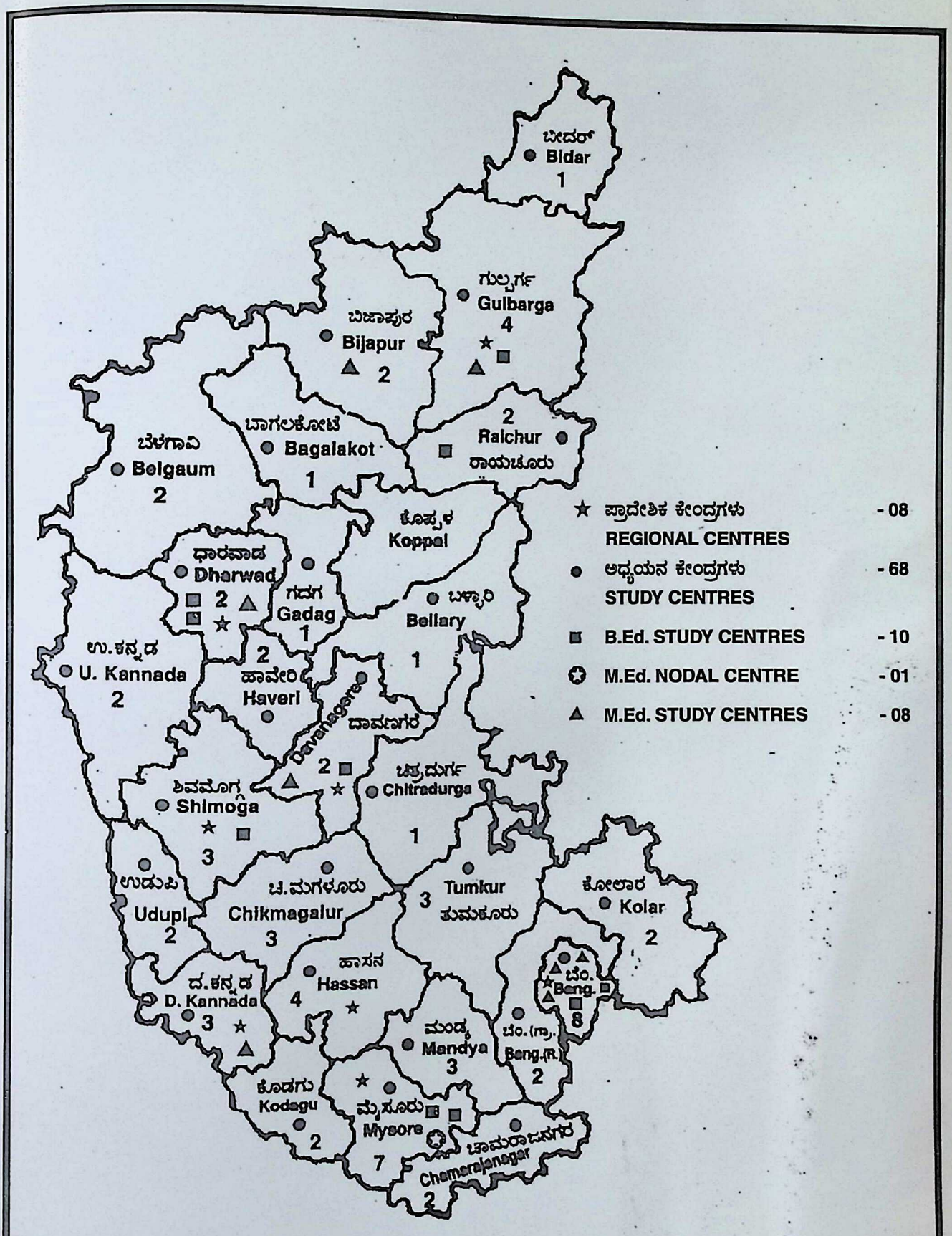

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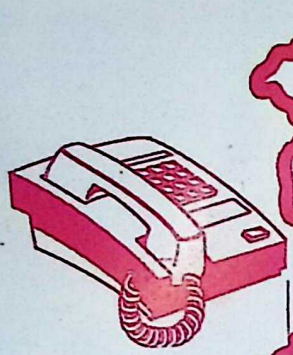

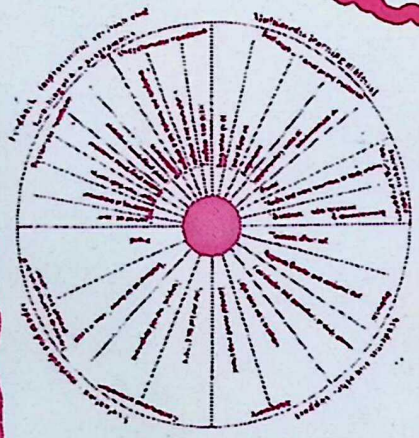

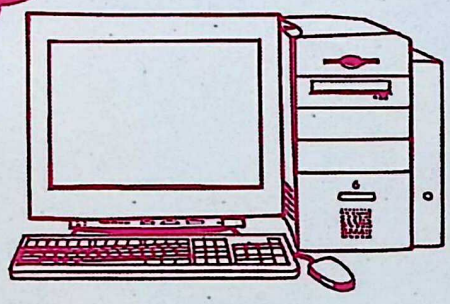

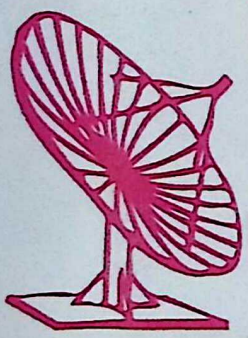

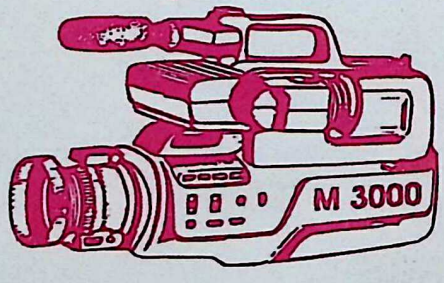

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